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THE HISTORY OF MARGARET MORTON.

LONDON :

PRINTED BY E. J. FRANCIS AND CO.

TOOK'S COURT AND WINE OFFICE COURT, E.C.

THE HISTORY OF
MARGARET MORTON.

BY
A CONTEMPORARY.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

London :
CHAPMAN & HALL, 193, PICCADILLY.
1878.

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THE HISTORY OF MARGARET MORTON.

CHAPTER I.

MRS. ARCHIBALD lived quietly and comfortably at Kensington. Her house was one of a row that formed Eva Terrace. There was a small garden in front and one considerably larger in the rear. As Mrs. Archibald rarely went out, her two gardens were not only a portion of her home, but during nine months of the year bounded her encroachments on the outer world. Both exhibited evidences of woman's care, taste, and affection. During spring, summer, and autumn the centre plat in the front garden was like a large-sized bouquet, the flowers of the seasons being transplanted thither in pots, which as they faded were removed to give place to blooming successors. In winter the garden was cleared of all the withered mementoes of the past, and healthy

evergreens gave a hale and friendly aspect to the neatly gravelled, well-tended spot.

So much for the front garden. That in the rear, covering more space, afforded opportunity for greater diversity in ornamentation, and consequently more scope for the exercise of horticultural taste. There was a little pond walled in with mimic rocks, that gave shelter to half-a-dozen gold-fish. In the centre of the pond there was fixed a slender tube, on the top of which stood a metal water-lily, painted white, with the edges of the leaves closely perforated. It was very pretty in the sunshine to see the water, after rising in a slender column, fall back in light spray through the leaves of the lily and beyond into the pond, with the white light-ray broken into all its rainbow hues. At the bottom of the garden there was a charming arbour, built of solid wood-work, but ornamented so profusely with creeping plants and a clustering vine as, with the trellised doorway, to assume the appearance of a bough-and-shrub-formed sylvan retreat. In one of the sunniest walks there was a small aviary, where canaries and German linnets made themselves happy in their glass house, never thinking of throwing stones at their neighbours. Their nearest neighbours

were bees, that in the same sunny locality followed out their mellifluous mission. There were a fernery, an aquarium, a rock-work grotto, and, in short, miniature specimens of all the varieties of ornamentation that a nobleman's "grounds" might be expected to exhibit on a large scale.

The interior of Mrs. Archibald's house accorded with the spirit that presided over the arrangement of her gardens. Everything was fresh and new, excepting the china and pictures, some of which were very old. Of the manufactured articles, as of the objects of *virtù*, it may be said everything was too good to be gaudy. Though each individual piece of furniture was substantially good, the whole arrangement wore rather an air of tranquil elegance than of mere material comfort.

Mrs. Archibald was leading a very quiet life. She was a widow; and her health was not robust. In her husband's time she had travelled, and seen a great deal of the world; but the circle of her immediate acquaintance was now narrowed to two old and two young friends. The elderly friends were Miss Maunsell and Mr. Wynum; the younger, Margaret Morton, Mrs. Archibald's niece, who lived with her, and Richard Archibald, the nephew of her

deceased husband, who did not live with his aunt, but who frequented the house constantly.

Miss Maunsell, the special friend of Mrs. Archibald, was no longer young, which is the condition of many unmarried as well as married ladies; but Miss Maunsell possessed the advantage of not looking old, at least of not looking as old as she was, and enjoyed the still greater privilege of not feeling so. Unbroken health, and an independent though small property, had contributed largely to these favourable results. But Miss Maunsell took some credit to herself. She had determined not to grow old, and had fought a good fight with Time, and he, like a well-bred old gentleman—being just then in a pleasant mood—had given place to the lady. He did not relinquish the acquaintance altogether though, as he called at least once a year, generally in the frosty weather, and left a slight reminder in the form of a rheumatic twinge or neuralgic pang; but the sun that melted the frost on Miss Maunsell's window-pane soon made her forget her uninvited visitor, and in spring-time she laughed as a hearty, staid lady does at an old beau that persists in pressing his attentions.

As to personal appearance, it was unmistakably plain that Miss Maunsell had been a

fine woman, and it was equally evident that what was a past tense to everybody else was still an emphatic present to herself. If the vertical elevation of her figure was not very great, the lateral extension was very considerable. In youth Miss Maunsell was reputed middle-sized; in more advanced life she was pronounced short and decidedly stout. The development that had in appearance curtailed her figure had also, apparently, shortened her face. But there was a gain in the latter case, as the lady's aquiline nose and strongly-marked features became softened in expression by the fuller fleshy surroundings.

Mrs. Archibald presented a marked contrast to Miss Maunsell. If Time had wrestled with Miss Maunsell, and submitted to a defeat in the contest, he seemed to have wholly forgotten Mrs. Archibald. One would say he had passed her by unnoticed. And no wonder; she was so noiseless, so tranquil, so unobtrusive, that Time, were he the sharpest detective, might be held excused for not having put her under surveillance. A soft repose, an aversion to everything indicative of decay, characterized Mrs. Archibald. Her house and gardens were a reflex of these characteristics. As to personal appearance, she was the fairy queen of

conservatism. When Mrs. Archibald met an old acquaintance, one who had not seen her for many years, one of the first utterances she heard was, "You look the same as ever; you're not at all changed." Then Mrs. Archibald would smile softly, say her health was not very good, that she looked upon herself as an invalid. This was a species of protest, which implied that a large allowance was to be made. And such allowance always was made. If Mrs. Archibald were not in delicate health, it was often said she would look quite as young as her niece.

Mrs. Archibald was presiding at her whist-table, assisted by her three friends, Miss Maunsell, Mr. Wynum, of whom we have already made mention, and Mr. Browne, of whom we shall have occasion to speak later. Of these, the two ladies and one of the gentlemen had each a history. They had fought the battle of society, had never been beaten, and had finally retired in close battalion, with their faces towards the advancing though distant foe. When the tramp of a coming generation was distinctly heard, when golden locks and thick dark curls were seen waving afar, and the flashing light of youthful eyes sparkled in the distance, the veterans retired into a dis-

trict of their own, where age was not acknowledged, and where youth was not recognized. There they enjoyed a kind of Elysian twilight, beneath whose softening influences they looked to each other very like what they had been twenty-five years before. The bloom on Mrs. Archibald's cheek was as delicate as, perhaps a little more delicate than, in past times, and if more permanent in character was not less lovely in tint. Her hair, thick and brown, would no doubt have appeared charming braided round her head, or done up in bows; but Mrs. Archibald, being an invalid, wore caps. They were pretty French caps, composed of the lightest lace and of the most delicate and natural-looking flowers; and these caps, according to the dictum of the highest millinery authorities, wonderfully rejuvenated the wearer.

Miss Maunsell's hair was quite as thick and to the full as brown as Mrs. Archibald's, but it was the subject of rumours which implied that it had become the property of the owner by purchase, not by natural growth. For the origin of these suspicions, so alarming to her friends—for they never reached her own ears—Miss Maunsell might be herself held accountable. Being a woman of quick impulses, her

movements were often abrupt, and on such occasions it had been oft-times remarked that the entire mass of her hair seemed to shift its position without any corresponding movement being observable in her face, so that after one of these hasty outbursts of feeling the parting in the hair was no longer in the line of direction of the nose. Miss Maunsell's forgetfulness of the conditions on which she held her hair was very painful to certain ladies of her acquaintance, who, however tranquil and self-possessed their movements might be, found themselves implicated in the general suspicions originating in their friend's indiscretion.

Miss Maunsell did not, like Mrs. Archibald, wear pretty French caps, where puffs of airy white lace peered out from amid knots of pretty ribbon, or from behind a graceful flowery spray. On the contrary, she wore a mysterious black covering on her head, which might be called either a net or a cap, and which fitted closely round her face, having on the front a border of white lace interlooped with broad ribbon, and standing boldly up like a line of fortified hills behind which lies a waste and barren land. This style of head-gear was not inappropriately worn by a lady who never turned her back on foe or friend.

Though Miss Maunsell's hair was more than suspected of not being indigenous to the soil which it covered, there could be no doubt about her teeth. These were few, ill-coloured, and scattered, but still sufficiently numerous to prevent the falling in of the cheeks and lips. The very defects of these teeth proved their genuineness, of which their owner was somewhat proud, as she often alluded, albeit despairingly, to her teeth, but never, under any circumstances, to her hair. Of her hands Miss Maunsell was decidedly vain. Though large, they were well formed, white, and soft, with tapered fingers and almond-shaped nails, and though unmistakably lady-like, were at the same time expressive of strength both physical and mental.

When Mrs. Archibald, Miss Maunsell, and Mr. Wynum resolved to retire from society, they exercised a wise discretion, and gave unquestionable proof of their knowledge of human nature.

Those who in their circle have been idols or oracles, because of their personal or mental gifts, must be endowed with extraordinary tact if they know how to withdraw from the shrine or abdicate the tripod before they are roughly disestablished. Time is merciless, and

not only steals the bloom from beauty, but the prestige from talent. Society is insatiable, ever and ever demanding something new. Youth is rude, and manhood is clamorous, and the idols before whom our fathers worshipped, and the oracles to which they reverently listened, we pass unheeded by. Mrs. Archibald, Miss Maunsell, and Mr. Wynum had too much tact to wait to be deposed; they abdicated, each making some accidental circumstance causal to the laying down of power. Mrs. Archibald had lost money, Mr. Wynum had lost his wife, and Miss Maunsell had lost all hope of changing her name. The two former had the advantage of being able to avow their motives; Miss Maunsell was obliged to suppress hers. Not that she was without an ostensible reason, far from it. She said she could not leave that "dear creature"—meaning Mrs. Archibald—"to sit for ever alone."

These three personages were fortunate in having a social history to which their friends as well as themselves could refer. As to Mr. Browne, being short of stature, plain of feature, and, withal, blunt of speech, it was not possible he could ever have contended in the social arena for the brilliant, airy nothings with which the victors there are crowned.

Anatomically speaking, Mr. Browne, of course, had a heart, as, theologically speaking, it was never denied he had a soul; but these terms, "heart" and "soul," are used in another than a physiological or ecclesiastical sense by the refined lexicographers of a super-polished society, and imply something more ethereal—something, as it were, more diaphanous—than the bodily organ that helps to regulate the circulation of the blood, and something more sensuous than the eternal spirit that will one day be made answerable for the deeds done in the flesh. Considered under this aspect, Mr. Browne had often been pronounced to have no soul, no heart, and those—ladies, it need not be said—who uttered the judgment did so feigning to envy the heartless and soulless creature who by the deficiencies of his nature escaped the delicate sorrows to which they and those of their class were doomed. Had Mr. Browne chosen to sacrifice at the altar of Hymen he might have eluded the doubtful praise that refused to number him in the category of the super-refined. Even with his own sex the not handsome Mr. Browne scarcely fared better than with the other. He had been the college companion of both Mr. Archibald and Mr. Wynam. By these gentlemen he was regarded as an

excellent, plain-natured fellow, an appreciator of their excellences, not a participator in the lofty qualities of intellect that distinguished them. There were, however, occasions on which Mr. Browne's services were found very useful. His sagacity and knowledge of business had more than once helped Mr. Archibald through pecuniary complications in which that gentleman had become involved, owing to the recklessness of a younger brother, and but for his wise prevision Mrs. Archibald's income in her widowhood would have been much less than it really was. In short, Mr. Browne was a common-place person, extremely useful where matter-of-fact services were needed, and esteemed by his more gifted friends just as an upright man, useful but not brilliant, deserves to be.

When Mrs. Archibald, after her husband's death, said she would pass the remainder of her life at Kensington, her friend Miss Maunsell took lodgings in the neighbourhood; and when Mr. Wynum, who had been a University chum of Mr. Archibald's, and who had known Miss Maunsell longer than any gentleman could in politeness say he knew a lady, came to pay a passing visit to his old acquaintances, he liked the locality where they were staying

so well that, considering the social attractions offered, he thought he could not do better than take up his abode there until his agent should summon him to the north, where Mr. Wynum intimated his monetary affairs would soon require his presence.

Miss Maunsell was living at No. 52, St. John's Terrace, Kensington. Mrs. Archibald, when Mr. Wynum spoke of wishing to become her neighbour, remarked that Mrs. Green had a suite of rooms disengaged, which she thought he would like. Miss Maunsell thought so too, and praised "poor Green," her landlady, to that degree that Mr. Wynum said Miss Maunsell's living in the house was the highest recommendation the lady could possess. Accordingly the gentleman called at 52, saw the disengaged rooms, acceded to the terms asked, and, finally, promised to take possession within three days. It was then, at the last moment, or rather after the last moment, for the bargain had been ratified, that Miss Maunsell was seized with a moral tremor, and, in great perturbation of spirit, consulted Mrs. Archibald as to what she thought the world would say when it became known that Mr. Wynum had taken up his abode in the house where she resided. Mrs. Archibald accredited

the world with much common sense when she asserted decidedly that it would be silent on the subject. The doubts and objections afterwards raised Mrs. Archibald satisfied, and succeeded in completely allaying her friend's maiden fears. Mr. Wynum took possession of the drawing-rooms at No. 52, Miss Maunsell occupying the rooms generally known as "the parlours," but which Mrs. Green called the "first floor."

CHAPTER II.

It was no wonder that Mrs. Archibald and Miss Maunsell were pleased when Mr. Wynum took up his abode in their vicinity. They had known him in the most brilliant period of their womanhood, when all three were members of a wide social circle, within whose circumference wit and beauty and learning were appreciated, and received their fullest meed of admiration. Within that circle Mr. Wynum possessed great influence, owing more to his personal qualities than to the largeness of his fortune. He was a man from whom great things were expected, one who was believed capable of achieving success in any career he might choose to enter. He had taken honours at the University, but had not become a member of any profession. People said Parliament was the sphere at which his ambition aimed. Had it been, he might easily have entered the British Senate; for in

those days boroughs were in the gift of peers, and Mr. Wynum was intimately acquainted with the Duke of Wellenough, who had the power of nomination to several boroughs. But Mr. Wynum was not so minded. Not that he was an idle man, for no day passed of which Mr. Wynum did not devote some hours to reading. He kept himself *au courant* of the best literature of the day, and on his library table some of his college books were generally to be seen lying. The 'Novum Organum,' the great 'Analogy,' and Locke's most celebrated essay, were always within his reach. Mr. Wynum was gifted with a very tenacious memory, and what he had once thoroughly learned seemed to be for ever lithographed on his brain. This accuracy of memory, combined with delicate literary taste, formed one source of his influence over the minds of those who had traversed the same educational curriculum as himself. Men trained in obedience to certain laws of thought, whose necks have been early bent to the yoke of the great old master-minds, yield a loving homage to the luminaries whose light has travelled through a long term of centuries to illuminate the cottage of their hearts. These names are always to them words of

talismanic power, at whose utterances their souls spring forward in prompt obedience. And this is chiefly true of minds that have accepted the teachings of the ancient classic schools, and worshipped there, undoubtingly, unquestioningly, never thinking of instituting a comparison between their oracles and these of modern times. Such men are votaries, who, having lighted their lamps at the sun, never turn to inquire if any of the stars could kindle as divine a ray.

Other men there are who, having listened to the teachings of the ancients and been penetrated with their wisdom, have learned to believe after such a fashion that they have looked around near to themselves and have found that the stream of mind, once set flowing, has never ceased to run, and even at their feet and all about them they have found thought, in a different form certainly to that which they had first worshipped, and of other hues — gems of a smaller number of facets, but still essentially the same as those whose brightness had adorned the temple in which they first learned to worship. The discoverers of this modern thought are struck by the differences it presents to the ancient, but they do not always observe the points of agreement.

Did they examine carefully they would recognize the great principle of unity that lies at the bottom of all created things, but in their haste they denounce the past and exalt the present, which is but a continuation of the past.

Of these two classes of scholars, the latter—those who exalt the present above the past—are in reality the pioneers of progress, but they are often hasty in coming to conclusions. The great tide of thought, whose source is coeval with the creation of mind, has often taken a subterranean course; Arethusian-like, it has sometimes sunk beneath the sands of time, but has not ceased to flow, and when, after long travel, it has reappeared at the surface, it has not been immediately recognized, because the soil of late formations through which it has been filtered has imparted certain qualities that at first examination make the discoverers think they have found an entirely new spring.

Mr. Wynum was an exalter of the modern school of thought and knowledge, and a decrifier of the ancient. The process by which he arrived at this mental condition was somewhat curious. When Mr. Wynum left the University he resolved to travel, a determina-

tion that became a scholar who had money at command. He longed to gaze on the sites of ancient Roman power, but he did not set out on his travels until he had sufficiently mastered French and Italian to be independent of the services of a courier. In his tour he did not content himself with merely staring at the stereotyped sights. As a matter of course he ascended Vesuvius and descended into Pompeii, and in a scholarly spirit he endeavoured to trace the sites of ancient cities as his memory recalled the records of remote historic periods. Mr. Wynum did not travel over the Continent on foot, knapsack on back; on the contrary, he availed himself of every mode of conveyance that the civilization of the times afforded. He travelled in a comfortable carriage—there were no railways in those days—and stopped at the best hotels. He did not write sketches for periodicals, but he kept a diary for his own satisfaction. Possibly Mr. Wynum did not possess the “knack” of writing, which comes of practice, certain it is he did not seek to become a “contributor” or an “own correspondent.” When he walked his carriage was within sight, and when he stopped at an hotel he was treated as a “milord.”

If Mr. Wynum did not study the peasantry

of France and Italy in detail, travelling from village to village with sketch-book and crayon in hand, he studied both nations *en gros*, as represented in their literature. He quickly became familiarized with the standard writers of both countries. He could fully appreciate a French comedy *mise en scène*, and in Italian he learned to understand, without the medium of mental translation, the burning thoughts and terse expressions of the author of the *Divina Commedia*. This rapid acquisition of knowledge had a perverse effect on Mr. Wynum's judgment. He thought that if modern languages could be acquired so easily it was a great waste of time to spend years in the study of ancient tongues, which, after all, could never serve as vehicles of communication with his fellow-men. In reasoning thus, Mr. Wynum overlooked the fact that all this early study was culture bestowed on the mental soil, which sped the rapid fructification of the later-sown seeds. He began to believe that had modern languages taken the place given to the ancient, in his educational curriculum, he would, long years before, have reached as high a point on the hill of knowledge as he had actually attained. From being a malcontent he soon became a rebel. Within his circle

Mr. Wynum's opinions had great weight. Still, it was somewhat paradoxical to hear a man decry the study of ancient languages and depreciate the University system, the whole force of whose denunciations rested on his repute for a profound knowledge of the one and long obedience to the other, and whose most powerful weapons of attack were the classic elegance and lucidity of his expressions. The abuse of Latin and Greek and of University education in general by a man who has taken honours at Oxford or Cambridge is always well received by the masses. In a country like England, where there is a class education so expensive as to be beyond the reach of the million, it is very gratifying to the excluded majority to see a man step forth from amongst the intellectual aristocracy, and speak with scorn of the privileges he has himself enjoyed, whilst, at the same time, the strongest proof of the reality of these privileges is the force with which he is able to decry them. He is for the moment a Mirabeau, not, indeed, rejected by his peers, but willingly throwing himself into the arms of a party who admire him for the possession of those very gifts which he and they affect to despise.

Mr. Wynum's disparagement of the ancient

classics and of English University training became stronger as he advanced in life, but in order to comprehend fully all the circumstances that contributed to this result it will be necessary to know something of Mr. Wynum's family affairs and connexions.

Charles Wynum was the second son of a wealthy mill-owner in the north of England. The father at his death left to each of his three sons a share in the factory. The eldest son was thoroughly imbued with a commercial spirit; and, either through love of unshackled rule, or through a belief that his brother's literary tastes would render him unfit for business, he offered to purchase Charles's share in the factory. The terms proposed being very liberal the offer was accepted. Charles Wynum, after making the "grand tour," as a journey through France and Italy was called in those days, generally paid an annual visit to the Continent. When in London, he had lodgings in Pall Mall or Jermyn Street; he frequented good society, and was member of more than one West End club. He had never held an appointment of any kind. The labours of Parliamentary life, he said, were too toilsome for him; but the truth was Charles Wynum knew that he could never succeed as an orator, and therefore

shunned a position where he would remain undistinguished; a non-success or a neutral victory would be fatal to the reputation he had achieved. Charles Wynum's society was courted by single men who gave dinner and supper parties, for a more entertaining companion could nowhere be found. Mistresses of large mansions, who during "the season" held large assemblies, never forgot to invite Charles Wynum. He was as valuable an addition to the ball-room as to the dinner-table. He was a graceful dancer, and knew how to distribute his attentions without showing too marked a preference for any lady. He had a cultivated voice, and could sing a good second's. He had studied music, but had the good taste never to touch any instrument before a large company, or, indeed, anywhere but in his own apartments, when he had a few friends to dinner or supper, and on such occasions Charles Wynum was, by universal consent, acknowledged to be a graceful and well-bred host.

To enter what is called "good society" had been the ambition of Charles Wynum's youth. In a country like England, where education is still expensive, and where fifty years ago it was still more so, and where to graduate in a University is a mark of caste, it was no wonder

that Charles Wynum believed he had put his foot on the first round of the ladder he wished to climb when he entered Oxford. But his ambition was not the offspring of apish snobism ; it had its source in a natural refinement that made him shrink from everything vulgar. It was undeniable that he loved and tried to acquire knowledge for its own sake ; but, whilst doing so, he was fully aware he was treading a pathway that would lead to the upper circles he so desired to visit. It might be said he was a blind worshipper of rank ; but high rank was, in his mind, inseparably united with refined manners and delicate feeling. Though Charles Wynum felt almost ashamed of being the son of a manufacturer, he had, notwithstanding, enough of the trade-mark on his intellect to appreciate fully the importance of money. He partly won, partly bought, his way upwards on the social pyramid, whose apex is so very narrow ; and, though he never touched that glittering point, he fixed his place in a select circle, at no great distance beyond which lay the very highest.

At thirty years of age Charles Wynum was in the full enjoyment of the honours of the career into which his ambition had led him. During the succeeding ten years his popu-

larity seemed to increase, and at forty he was more sought after than ever. If he did not still dance with as much vivacity as had marked his movements twenty years previously, his performance was more graceful, and, as he had not become stout, his tall figure and *distingué* bearing rendered him still in the ball-room a rival regarded as dangerous by much younger men.

Mr. Wynum was beginning to be looked upon as a man too fond of the selfish comforts of bachelor life to think of sacrificing at Hymen's altar. A candid friend took an opportunity of telling him how he was estimated on this point by certain ladies. Mr. Wynum laughed, and said a man cannot walk out into the highways, nor even into a drawing-room, and ask any passing pedestrian or chance dancer to be his wife. He may expose himself to the mortification of a refusal, or, worse, to the disaster of an acceptance.

Though Mr. Wynum laughed as he made these remarks, he felt annoyed. After the departure of his too candid friend Mr. Wynum addressed himself to his mirror. The reflection he beheld there was satisfactory. The broad forehead was white and unwrinkled, and, if the figure was more developed than in former

years, there was not the slightest approach to corpulency. Still, the remarks retailed by his visitor had created a feeling of discomfort that he could not shake off. It was not that Mr. Wynum was desirous of marrying, but it jarred upon his feelings to find he was beginning to be looked upon as an old man.

There are men who live to please, and who are pleased only inasmuch as they please. Such people shrink sensitively from the imputation of old age. This is especially the case with persons whose social success is due as much to external qualifications as to intellectual gifts. Such was Charles Wynum's position. In early manhood, on his first entrance into society, his tall, slight figure and regular features, combined with his reputed wealth and academic success, had won him admiration; and, ten years later, his greater self-possession, his increased command over the knowledge he possessed, his more delicate tact in putting it forth, in short, all those acquired charms of manner that are really based upon a knowledge of the human heart, conjoined with the power of playing on that many-stringed instrument, had made for Mr. Wynum a circle of admirers to whom his dictum was law.

The insinuation of old age thrown out

against Mr. Wynum had an especial flavour of bitterness for him. He was very proud of his social success, but he was now brought to the sudden conviction that such a growth scarcely reaches maturity when it commences to decay. It was unpleasant to feel that the tide of time which had so long carried him forward was beginning to ebb, and would eventually leave him—he did not wish to picture where.

Mr. Wynum was in this frame of mind when he received an invitation from a friend, asking him to spend a month in Scotland, where he had hired a shooting-box for the season. The invitation was accepted, and at the expiration of the month, the box being given up, the friends thought of running over to Paris; but Mr. Compton, a gentleman whose acquaintance they had made on the moors, asked them to pause in their southward journey and spend a few days at his house in Yorkshire.

The whole transaction was of the simplest, and yet each step became a link in a circular chain that hasped and padlocked Charles Wynum's fate. The preliminaries were trifling, but the result was astounding. Had Mr. Wynum refused the invitation to Scotland, as he was at first tempted to, he would

not have made the acquaintance of Mr. Compton, would not have visited at his house, nor met his daughter Minnie.

Within six months of Miss Compton's first acquaintance with Mr. Wynum she became his wife. The wedding took place in Yorkshire, where the name of Wynum was well known. Amongst the wedding guests were Mr. Wynum, the eldest brother of the bridegroom, and his wife, who entertained a great admiration, and almost affection, for her brother-in-law. She had always expected that Charles would marry at the least a duke's daughter; but when he married the daughter of a country gentleman she was far better pleased than she would have been had her expectations been fulfilled. It would not be so very pleasant to see the wife of her husband's younger brother take precedence of the elder brother's wife. So far Charles Wynum in his marriage satisfied his own family. As in those days people were egotistical enough to believe that all who knew them took an interest in their proceedings, wedding-cards quickly informed Mr. Charles Wynum's numerous acquaintance of the step he had taken. Great was the surprise and boundless the curiosity excited. The latter sentiment, which

had birth in June, was not gratified until the following November, when Mr. and Mrs. Charles Wynum, having returned from a tour on the Continent, and a visit to their friends in the north, appeared in London. Everybody was disappointed on first seeing Mrs. Wynum. It was an involuntary compliment to her husband that his wife was expected to be something extraordinary. Either dazzling beauty or uncountable riches had been set down as the cause of Mr. Charles Wynum's fall into matrimony; and when it was found that his wife possessed neither all who had previously pronounced upon the question marvelled exceedingly. Mrs. Charles Wynum was found to be only nice-looking, gentle-tempered, and five-and-twenty. As usual, the men were soon reconciled, and said she was a charming creature, but the women persisted in wondering what Mr. Wynum could have seen in her.

Fortunately for Minnie Wynum her husband had no cause for wonder. The qualities he fancied before marriage he saw in her, he found, when she became his wife, that she really possessed. He was more than satisfied, he was happy, as he told his wife one morning as they sat at breakfast at their lodgings in

Pall Mall. But Mr. Wynum was a man of the world, and knew that in marrying he had fixed his *status* in society. He knew that henceforth he could only associate with men whose wives his wife could afford to entertain. He was aware that in thus defining his position he was obliged to descend some few steps of the social ladder, which he had not climbed without difficulty. Mr. Wynum had too much self-respect to hesitate; at the same time he was not without a hope, amounting almost to certainty, that he should obtain a government appointment, that would restore with advantage all he was now resigning. He lost no time in setting to work. He was acting under the influence of the strongest stimulus that can move a right-minded man to exertion. He was a husband, and was about to become a father.

A man who has numbered more than forty years, and who has never asked a favour for himself, feels rather awkward when he undertakes to do so for the first time. With old friends, men well versed in the trade of politics, Mr. Wynum talked the matter over, having once broken the ice of reserve. He could not complain of want of good intention on the part of his friends; the difficulty was in finding

a place to suit. The Civil Service, either Home or Indian, was out of the question. The diplomatic service? Yes, he would take an ambassadorship, he said, laughing, but he was too old to become an *attaché* and commence the drudgery of office. The truth was, Mr. Wynum wished to get in middle age such a post as he might have attained to had he entered the civil or diplomatic service twenty-five years before.

Soliciting favours is unpleasant work for a man who has all his life jealously preserved his independence. Not that Mr. Wynum was subjected to a refusal; on the contrary, men of high position exerted all their influence on his behalf, but, as he acknowledged, they could not make a place for him, nor could they create a vacancy. And when vacancies did occur, they were such as he could not fill, or else there were candidates for the appointments whose claims could not be overlooked. Before long Mr. Wynum was convinced that it is not easy for a man past forty, who has never held office of any kind, to get an appointment. But he could not tell this to his wife, who, in her loving admiration, would not have been surprised were her husband solicited to accept the post of Prime Minister. Nor could

he enter into explanations with her father, who could not be made to understand why a man who dined with dukes and lords could not become a cabinet minister if he chose.

The session closed, and Mr. Wynum had not found an appointment. So closed many a succeeding session, and yet no ministry had profited by Mr. Wynum's talents. The tired applicant had grown despondent. His natural sensibility, increased by high mental culture, had been deeply wounded by the failure of his repeated attempts to obtain a place. A coarser-minded man might have still persevered; a less educated man might have blustered about his proficiency, and the preference given to blockheads, but not so with Mr. Wynum. His pride was hurt at being obliged to ask; his self-respect was wounded at being refused. Had Mr. Wynum been a vain instead of a proud man he might have consoled himself with thinking that the heads of governmental departments refused his services either because they were jealous of his superiority or could not appreciate his abilities; but Mr. Wynum was not able to hug himself in such fond self-conceit. On the contrary, he became self-distrustful, and began to doubt his competency. Under the influence of a morbid

feeling, he flung back upon his University education the odium of his non-success. He thought, until thought became conviction, that his extensive classical and profound mathematical knowledge had acted as bars to his advancement. Had he limited his intellectual aspirations to understanding the four first rules of arithmetic, and to a slight acquaintance with English grammar, with, perhaps, a smattering of one or two modern languages, he might have made a brilliant figure, as he saw men of that standard of knowledge do, in the political and diplomatic circles.

The disappointments experienced by Mr. Wynum fell heavily on his wife's heart. She regarded them as so many reproaches to herself. Had Charles not married her, she often thought in her solitary musings, he would not have been obliged to ask favours; or had he, as he might have done, married the daughter of some man of high position, he might then have commanded where he was now obliged to solicit. Though such thoughts frequently passed through Mrs. Wynum's mind, she forbore to give them utterance. They were accompanied with a painful sense of humiliation that made her shrink from all allusion to such subjects. Had she spoken out, the expression of what she felt

might have acted beneficially on her husband, by rousing the manliness of his nature, as she might have inferred from what occurred when he once found her weeping in secret over her one source of sorrow. When Mr. Wynum learned the cause of his wife's tears, he repudiated the idea of having made a sacrifice in marrying her; on the contrary, he assured her his only regret was that he had not earlier made her acquaintance.

Mrs. Wynum was satisfied in her husband's affection, and believed him when he said that no social rank, however high, could be prized by him as was her love. But then arose another source of anxiety. What about little Charlie, her darling son? How came it that his father took so little notice of that beautiful boy, that attracted the notice of passing strangers? This was a torturing enigma for Mrs. Wynum, which she was wholly unable to solve. She did not perceive that her husband, embittered by disappointments, had fallen into a state of chronic discontent, of which the direct objects were the social, diplomatic, and educational systems of England. Having forced himself to believe that study was useless and learning profitless, he thought he had nothing to do for his child, and therefore did not cherish the

pride with which, under other circumstances, he might have planned a career for his boy.

Little Charlie Wynum was nine years of age, and had a very small brother, only seven days old, when his mother died. During the first week that followed this death, little Charlie, when worked upon by the questions and explanations of the servants, sometimes fell into violent bursts of crying, at other times he subsided into silence, under the influence of a mysterious fear, of whose origin he was wholly ignorant.

When Mr. Wynum became a widower, his position was pitiable. He had lost the only being in the world whose friendship for him had stood the applied tests, and, when she was gone, he was not slow to discover that these tests had been very severe. She had been his comforter more than he had been her support. She had taken more than her share of his troubles: what had he given her in compensation? With the self-torturing skill in which practice had made him perfect, he took pleasure in recalling all his gentle Minnie had been to him. His mother-in-law, who was in the house, and who had loved her daughter sincerely, hid her grief, as women are often obliged to hide their griefs as well as their

wrongs, in kindly sympathy for her son-in-law, whose nerves had sustained so violent a shock. Mrs. Compton, as she had promised her dying daughter, took charge of the baby, and Mr. Wynum, with little Charlie, accepted his eldest brother's invitation to pass a few months at the family house in Yorkshire. Before the visit came to a close, it was agreed that little Charlie should remain with his uncle, who having been many years married, and being still childless, began to look upon his nephew as his heir.

CHAPTER III.

THE first of May, 1851, threatened to be an eventful day to Mrs. Green, Miss Maunsell's landlady. Mrs. Archibald, with her niece and her two nephews, had accepted an invitation to dine with the first-floor lodger at No. 52, St. John's Terrace. So had Mr. Wynum. Miss Maunsell was delighted at having an opportunity to exercise the virtue of hospitality, especially in favour of her dear friend Mrs. Archibald, who so seldom left her own house. During the last week of April, No. 52 had been turned out of the windows, according to Mrs. Green's account. But this must be regarded as an exaggerated statement; for the drawing-room floor remained undisturbed, so far as the furniture was concerned, though, as regarded the temper and feelings of the occupant of these rooms, there were moments when the turn-out there threatened to be more com-

plete than in any of the other parts of the house. The truth must be told. Mr. Wynum regarded the commotion kept up on the first floor during the last week of April as equivalent to a notice to quit, and he would assuredly have obeyed the intimation had Miss Maunsell been in the habit of giving dinner-parties. He told Mrs. Green his life was endangered. During this revolutionary week Mr. Wynum had more than once stumbled over rolls of carpet, incautiously left on the landing, and once had well-nigh on the same spot broken his neck over a chair, on which were placed a fender and fire-irons. On these occasions Mr. Wynum had expressed his feelings in fervent ejaculations, which, had they taken effect, would have exposed poor Mrs. Green's carpets and furniture to a fiery ordeal, through which, not being of asbestos, they could scarcely be expected to come unscathed. However, up to the twenty-eighth of April Mr. Wynum had passed through all these trials with no worse result than a few bruises on the lower limbs and a few billowy breaks of temper.

It was an unfortunate circumstance for Mrs. Green and her lodgers that the architect who planned No. 52, St. John's Terrace, had connected the first and second floors by means of

a very crooked staircase. It was also much to be regretted that at the bottom of the staircase, but lying considerably to the left, there was a very dark corner, which constituted a portion of the first-floor landing. It was also unfortunate for the persons who had to bear with the structural disadvantages of No. 52 that gas had never been introduced into the house, and that in the absence of the sun they were dependent for sensible light on a candle or lamp. One of these small artificial luminaries, placed on a bracket on the wall, when night came cast a timid ray towards the dark corner and up the crooked staircase. In the normal condition of the household the feeble light of candle or lamp had always been sufficient to point out to Mr. Wynum the balustrade, of which having taken hold, he ascended the crooked staircase with confidence. But, in the confusion created in the house by Miss Maunsell's contemplated dinner-party, the ray of the lamp or candle, theretofore sufficient for existing requirements, became not alone inadequate, but actually tended to mislead. The weak light magnified and deepened the shadow of any article that happened to be forgotten on the landing, so that Mr. Wynum frequently mistook the shadow for the sub-

stance, and, in his endeavours to avoid what seemed to him the reality, he was brought into violent contact with what he was taking precautions to shun. A week of such warfare was very trying to an elderly gentleman's temper, and equally great were poor Mrs. Green's trials during the same time. The bewildered landlady had exhausted her inventive faculties in making excuses to Mr. Wynum, but to a neighbouring gossip she told the truth without embellishment. Miss Maunsell had so worried her with cleaning and dusting, and moving furniture in and out, and putting things out of their places that ought to be in their places, that she did not know whether she was standing on her head or her heels, and it was no wonder if she was always forgetting something on the landing.

However, up to the twenty-eighth of April Mr. Wynum, as we have said, had escaped comparatively unhurt from the dangers through which he had passed. On the morning of that day Mrs. Green had congratulated herself on the prospect of her worry being soon at an end; and on the same morning Mr. Wynum, in coming downstairs, had observed, standing upright in the dark corner, a tall roll of carpet, at which he shook his stick, as it

reminded him of the trips into which some of its smaller brethren had betrayed him during the past six days.

About half-past ten on the night of the twenty-eighth of April Mr. Wynum returned to his lodgings at No. 52, St. John's Terrace, or, to speak more correctly, Mr. Wynum had at the above-mentioned hour reached the first-floor landing in the house where he lodged. Remembering the view he had obtained in the morning of the enemy in the dark corner, he resolved to keep close to the opposite wall, though by so doing he renounced the support of the baluster, and would be entirely dependent on his stick as an auxiliary. Mr. Wynum's conduct was dictated by prudence founded on experience, and would have been satisfactory in the results had the perils with which he was dealing been fixed quantities; but, unfortunately for Mr. Wynum, he had to do with shifting sandbanks, and just as he thought he had weathered the dreaded point he tripped. He staggered, and would have fallen, but for the support afforded by his stick. There was a crash, as if of breaking glass, and Mr. Wynum stood in darkness, but not in silence. He gave utterance to his opinion of his own position at the moment,

and of the general management of domestic concerns at No. 52, in tones and terms indicative rather of strong feeling than of Christian patience.

Amidst the crash of glass, the scrambling, scraping, and exclamations involved in and attendant on Mr. Wynum's disaster, Mrs. Green displayed the presence of mind that might be expected from an experienced landlady of single gentlemen: she remained close in her room. Not so Miss Maunsell. That lady hurried to the landing, taper in hand, and aggravated her fellow-lodger's annoyance by the effort which a lady's presence imposes on a gentleman of being courteous and calm under all circumstances. Mr. Wynum, by a great effort, tried to make light of the accident; but when Miss Maunsell, by the aid of her candle, discovered the ruins that lay about, her exclamations, uttered in a tone of deep alarm, could not fail to suggest to a listener the idea of, at the least, one or two broken limbs. Mrs. Green's fears overcame her caution. She ran upstairs, and arrived on the landing in time to find Miss Maunsell, with her hand on Mr. Wynum's shoulder, offering him all the consolation in her power.

A man over sixty, tripped by a roll of carpet,

cannot recover his footing with the elastic lightness that was his some forty years before. Mr. Wynum felt this. The conviction was mortifying, and all the more so, from being effected under the actual circumstances. Mr. Wynum's hat had fallen off: he was conscious of presenting a shattered appearance. His pride was hurt. Still, he so far controlled his feelings as to thank Miss Maunsell, sententiously indeed, but in a dignified manner, for her kind attentions, when the sight of Mrs. Green, who arrived at the moment, drove him to desperation. He asked in unsophisticated terms what demoniacal intentions she harboured in placing such traps in his way. And Mr. Wynum pointed to the fragments of the lamp scattered about, brought to that position by some unlucky movement of the excited gentleman's cane. The roll of carpet, that formed a transverse line between the wall and the bottom stair, spoke for itself.

In reply to her gentleman lodger's angry demands, Mrs. Green could only say,—“Dear me, sir; I'm sure, I'm very sorry. It shan't occur again.”

“I'll take very good care it shan't,” said Mr. Wynum, as he endeavoured to recover his hat by the aid of his cane; for, being

tall and not very supple, he was afraid to stoop.

Miss Maunsell, whose presence had been for a few moments overlooked, interposed. She took Mr. Wynum's hat from the hands of Mrs. Green, presented it to the owner, and said,—

“My dear sir, I'm so distressed at what has occurred! This dear creature”—pointing to Mrs. Green—“has nothing to do with it, and is not at all to blame. 'Twas all my fault. 'Twas I that had the carpet moved to that side and left there. Pray forgive her, and blame me.”

It would seem that the effort made by Mr. Wynum, in compliment to a lady's presence, to repress the external manifestation of his annoyance had acted favourably on his inward feelings. His irritation was rapidly subsiding. Miss Maunsell was not slow to perceive the proofs of her moral influence, and when she again addressed Mr. Wynum, exculpating Mrs. Green and criminating herself, there was a twinkle in her eye, and a humorous smile playing about her lip, that seemed to nullify her request to be blamed. Miss Maunsell repeated,—

“Pray forgive poor Green, and blame me.”

Mr. Wynum could not resist.

“Blame you, Miss Maunsell? Impossible! Who could do that?”

Mr. Wynum was standing perfectly upright, hat in hand, his temper, as well as his figure, apparently in perfect equilibrium.

“Now, my dear sir,” said Miss Maunsell, motioning with her hand towards the open door of her sitting-room, “you will do me the favour to step in. You can’t refuse.”

“Who could refuse Miss Maunsell?” said Mr. Wynum, bowing low, and preparing to follow the lady.

Miss Maunsell was endowed with a large fund of good-heartedness. She was filled with the spirit of hospitality, and, were she mistress of ten thousand a year, would have bestowed her gifts liberally, though, possibly, in many instances capriciously, on her poorer fellow-creatures. Having invited Mr. Wynum to seat himself in an arm-chair, Miss Maunsell took possession of another. She apologized for the absence of fire; but the morning had promised so fairly, that Mrs. Green had pronounced a fire unnecessary. Mr. Wynum agreed with Mrs. Green, though he still indulged in a fire himself.

“But, Miss Maunsell,” said the gentleman, “this little accident has occurred opportunely. I ought to have called on you, considering that

we have not seen you for nearly a week at Eva Terrace. I certainly have not omitted to inquire after your health both of Mrs. Archibald and Mrs. Green."

"Thank you, my dear sir; I've heard all that. You're very kind. Now, let me recommend you something hot."

Mrs. Green having just brought in boiling water and other necessary adjuncts, Miss Maunsell proceeded to mix a glass of something hot for her guest.

"You drink sugar, of course? Our family physician always recommended my dear mother to take something hot at night. It induces sleep; and that's so important."

"Miss Maunsell, you take nothing yourself."

"Pardon me, I do"; and the lady exhibited a proof of the fact.

Miss Maunsell was so kindly in her hospitality that Mr. Wynum forgot his collision with the roll of carpet, and Miss Maunsell, in an exuberance of feeling, confessed that her absence from Mrs. Archibald's card-table during the previous five days was attributable to the preparations for the coming dinner.

"That dear creature," she said, alluding to Mrs. Archibald, "so seldom goes anywhere that one would like to make her comfortable

when she does spend a day out of her own house. Poor dear, she has had much trouble."

"I wasn't aware of it," said Mr. Wynum, rather abstractedly.

"My dear sir, only think of losing her husband, and such a husband!—an elegant and accomplished man that adored her. The wonder is how she survived her troubles."

"People do survive such things," said Mr. Wynum, thoughtfully. "It is well she has no children."

"Never had; but do you think it well? A child would be such a comfort."

"Oh! she has her niece, who is quite as good as a daughter to her," said Mr. Wynum, rising and taking his place on the hearth, with his back to the grate, though there happened to be no fire there at the moment.

The turn the conversation had taken was not pleasant to Mr. Wynum. He disliked allusions to the past.

"Miss Maunsell," he said, quickly, "I must apologize. Carried away by your conversation, I forgot the hour. I've kept you up far beyond your usual time."

"Not at all, Mr. Wynum, not at all. Well, as you persist in going, good night!"

CHAPTER IV.

It was the second week of May. The great Exhibition had been opened, Miss Maunsell's dinner to her friends had come off, and Henry Morton, Mrs. Archibald's nephew, had left for Paris.

The excitement of the previous week had fatigued or, rather, worried Mrs. Archibald. She disliked any breach in her customary routine, and was glad to take her place again at the whist-table, with her nephew, Richard Archibald, as partner, and Miss Maunsell and Mr. Wynum as opponents.

"I expected Mr. Browne," said Mrs. Archibald; "he called in the afternoon, and promised to come this evening for a rubber."

"He has friends—country cousins, I believe—staying with him; come up to see the Exhibition?" said Miss Maunsell.

"Yes; but they are engaged somewhere else to-night."

A ring was heard at the garden gate. Miss Maunsell, upon whom the duties of dealer had fallen, continued to mix the cards slowly, until the servant announced—"Mr. Browne." The customary greetings and inquiries having been made, Richard Archibald, who had risen on Mr. Browne's entrance, said, motioning to the seat he had vacated,—

"Mr. Browne, I was only your *locum tenens*."

"By no means. Play your rubber out: I'll cut in afterwards."

"We haven't commenced," said Richard; "we've been waiting for you."

So Mr. Browne seated himself at the card-table, and Richard Archibald returned to his place beside his cousin, Margaret Morton.

Was she his cousin? No. But the world spoke of these two young people as cousins; their relatives, too, talked of them as such, and altogether it would seem as though, if they did not, they ought to stand in that relation to each other. A great many who talked of them as cousins believed they would one day be something nearer to one another. The way in which this generally accredited cousinship came into existence was this: Margaret Morton was daughter to Mrs. Archibald's brother, and Richard Archibald was nephew to her

husband. As each of these young people called Mrs. Archibald aunt, it was no great wonder that, being thrown very much together from childhood, they should call each other cousin. It was a convenient family arrangement, and smoothed over many little difficulties.

When Richard Archibald returned to his seat beside Margaret Morton he said,—

“So you had a letter from Henry this morning; what does he say?”

“The letter was to aunt. He is obliged to remain in Paris for at least a month longer. On his return he’ll tell us everything. I do wish he’d come back. ’T was provoking he should leave almost as soon as he arrived.”

“Oh, business must be thought of before anything else!—but women never understand that.”

“What a pleasure it was for me to see my brother! Though I knew I had an elder brother I never seemed to realize his existence until he clasped me in his arms. Henry is very handsome.”

“Do you think him at all like you?”

“Not at all,” said Margaret, laughing: “he’s very fair; I’m dark.”

“Not very,” said her cousin.

“How good Henry is! How very generous! One of the first things he said to me was that, though poor papa had not been able to give me any money, he would give me a large sum when the estate is bought.”

“Oh, don’t talk of money, Margaret. Women don’t want money. I mean a young girl who has brothers and cousins that know how to make money will be sure to have a splendid position.”

Richard Archibald was confused as he finished the sentence; he felt he was treading on forbidden ground. His cousin blushed.

“I only meant to say how generous Henry is,” she observed; and then quickly going on, “he brought me so many messages from my poor old ayah. You know papa left her a pension.”

“Would you like to return to India?” said Richard.

“Oh, I’ve no wish on the subject. I’ve no recollection of the place. I was only four when I was sent to England. I feel quite English.”

“So you ought to. You were born here.”

“Very true. I sometimes forget that: I think of myself as Indian.”

“Well, in one sense, both the Archibalds

and Mortons are Indian, though English born, but our strength comes from the East, or, rather, lies there, for 'tis there our money was made."

"I thought," said Margaret, laughing, "our real strength lay in our Anglo-Saxon brain, that makes us dominate wherever we set our foot."

"Quite right," said Richard, smiling; "I forgot my favourite theory at the moment. I'm glad you remembered it."

"But what shall we say of Ned? His mother was not English born."

"Her parents were English. 'Tis the same thing."

"How odd," said Margaret, "that I should have a brother eighteen years old that I have never seen! Poor papa had a great deal of trouble. First dear mamma died; then Ned's mamma died. I was very sorry for her, though I had never seen her. I shouldn't have minded having a step-mother, if she made papa happy. I think it would be very unjust."

"Quite right. Besides, aunt has always been a mother to you."

"Yes," said Margaret, softly and slowly, as if weighing the correctness of the assertion;

then, returning to her first train of thought, added,—

“Poor papa got into dreadful difficulties, didn’t he?”

“Not so bad as my father, though both had enough. But Henry and I will set everything right yet.”

Margaret went on, still thinking of her brother,—“What a pity papa couldn’t get the money that’s laid by for the estate. Henry told aunt he would willingly have given up his right. Henry is very generous, but he could do nothing; the trustees held the money.”

“They only did their duty. The law with regard to trust-money is very stringent. The trustees had not the power to turn a penny from the prescribed use. They could not apply the money to any purpose but that for which it was left by the testator. That’s the law of the case, and all the better for Henry. He’ll have the estate; so will his heirs. The firm in India will clear itself ultimately, and so will mine; I mean my share in my firm. When I become the head of the house of Ware, Warren and Co. I’ll show them the advantage of having a lawyer in the firm.”

“You never allow us to forget you’re a lawyer,” said Margaret.

"Of course not, and I intend to make you one, too."

Margaret gave a little laugh, and at the same time blushed.

"I shall pass the long vacation here, I've arranged it with aunt. She doesn't intend to go to the seaside this autumn, so I shall stay quietly here in Kensington. You shall read a regular course of law studies with me."

"I shall be very glad," said Margaret, colouring deeply.

Richard smiled, and a peculiar look lighted his eyes for a moment. But it was a transient emotion. He returned to the subject of conversation.

"It will be necessary that you should read. I shall want you to write a good deal for me, either to elaborate my notes or fill in my sketches. You couldn't do it unless you understood technical terms. I intend to write a series of articles in one of the law magazines, which I shall afterwards publish in a separate volume."

"I think," said Margaret, "I understand all the ordinary Latin law phrases."

"You do perfectly well. Your Latin was very useful to you in copying those papers which you did for me in the winter. I'm glad

now the editor didn't take 'em. I'll recast 'em. They'll make a capital book."

"I wish I knew Latin better," said Margaret, timidly. "I should like to know everything thoroughly that I know at all."

"Oh, you know enough for my purpose as it is. But I must go, Margaret, 'tis ten."

Having made his adieus, the gentleman left.

Richard Archibald's character was, to a great extent, revealed in the phrase, "You know enough for my purpose." Though only eight-and-twenty years of age, he viewed the universe solely in reference to himself. Every individual with whom he had relations he regarded only in as far as he, she, or it could be made conducive to his service. This concentrated selfishness was not the result of deep-laid purpose, it was the natural growth of unconsciously acquired mental habits. He had been early taught that he would have to fight his way through the world, and he believed he was able to do so single-handed. With deep bitterness of feeling against his opponents, and boundless confidence in himself, had Richard Archibald commenced his preparations for the great social and commercial battle which he was resolved to fight.

Richard Archibald had not much money at

his command, but he had excellent prospects. By the will of his late uncle he was heir to a thousand a year, and in right of his father he inherited a junior partnership in an eminent Calcutta house. It was Richard Archibald's peculiar fortune to have good prospects, but very small actual possessions. The thousand a year to which he was heir was enjoyed by his aunt, and would not become his till after her death; the profits of the partnership in the Calcutta house were mortgaged to the firm for the liquidation of debts contracted by his father.

Richard Archibald was satisfied with his prospects; the very difficulties that lay in his way became gradually, one would almost say, agreeable to him, on account of the heightening effect which, in his resolute self-confidence, he felt they must exercise on his ultimate triumph.

CHAPTER V.

THE genius that presided over the spring of 1851, when commerce, in the name of the arts, useful and idealistic, was drawing to a point the threads of sympathy that unify the human family, did not forget Mr. Wynum. He whose domestic relations had been so rudely rent long before was awakened with a sudden pleasurable throb to the sense of being a father. One morning in June Mr. Wynum found on his breakfast-table a letter addressed in the handwriting of his son. Mr. Wynum seldom received letters, but when such an event did occur he made a great fuss. He liked to appear as though important affairs waited his decision. Mr. Wynum was always very dignified with his landlady, and when that personage on the morning in question had knocked at his door, and received permission to enter, bearing a tray on which were sundry hot preparations for breakfast, Mr. Wynum interposed his hand

as a barricade to her further advance. Mrs. Green paused, without speaking; and Mr. Wynum, who still held an unopened letter in his hand, attentively perusing the superscription through his binocular eye-glass, said politely,—

“Mrs. Green, pray give me a few minutes. I shall look at my letters before breakfast.”

Though Mr. Wynum expected nothing in his letter more extraordinary than the quarterly cheque that he was in the habit of receiving from his brother, and though he dignified his single epistle with a grammatical plural, he really meant nothing beyond the innocent self-indulgence of a make-believe importance. So Mr. Wynum wiped each glass of his binocular, looked attentively at the seal of his letter, and after a few moments’ consideration rang the bell. Mrs. Green again appeared with her tray, and everything having been properly placed, and Mr. Wynum having adjusted his newspaper on his right hand, and his letter on his left, commenced to breakfast. Mr. Wynum, like the clique to which he belonged, disliked thinking of the past or the future; he lived in the present, and, like a constitutional Englishman, as he was, every morning devoutly read the *Times*. There were no penny papers

in those days, and had there been, assuredly Mr. Wynum, who regarded himself as a literary aristocrat, and who was quite as exclusive as though he were a hereditary legislator, would not have deigned to patronize such cheap knowledge.

Having breakfasted, which operation was performed in easy stages, affording intervals for the perusal of the newspaper, Mr. Wynum took his place in an easy-chair, drew from the pocket of his dressing-gown a cigar-case, and picked therefrom a cigar, which he deliberately lighted, and then humoured with a few puffs, turning it occasionally in his mouth, until he brought it to the state he desired. Mr. Wynum then leaned back in his chair, and, by means of long in- and exhalations, began to despatch, ceiling-ward, slender spiral columns of smoke. The cigar being now in a state of steady ignition, and the smoker's feelings being soothed by nicotine influences, he quietly opened his letter and commenced to read. It was from his son, who said:—

“MY DEAR FATHER,—I shall be in London in a few days. I do not intend to return here. I hope you will not be angry; pray do not. There is no quarrel between uncle and me—

none at all. At first we sparred a little when I told him I knew I was not fit for trade. And I know I am not. You were not fit for trade, father. Uncle is, but then he is the only one of the family that is. Uncle William was not. He was like you. Uncle Tom was a little angry, but he soon gave in. He has been very kind—bought me a commission in a regiment that is going to India. I shall soon be in the Company's service. I shall have good pay, and see the world. Dear father, pray do not be angry. I assure you I am not fit for trade. I shall be in town this week, and will explain everything.

“Your dutiful Son,

“CHARLES WYNUM.

“Uncle sends the enclosed cheque.”

To a commercial-minded father this note would have given a shock. It would have brought to his mind the conviction that his son, by breaking with his uncle, had virtually flung away a rich inheritance, and renounced a social position in which ease and influence were secured to the possessor. But Mr. Wynum, not being a commercial-minded man, was very differently affected.

Having read his son's note to the end, Mr.

Wynum leaned back in his chair. In this attitude he fixed his eyes on the cornice immediately above the mantel-piece, and the smoke of his cigar followed in the same direction. During a five minutes' meditation, Mr. Wynum seemed to pass in mental review a long series of events; he finally laid aside his cigar. He put it down methodically on the little tray or tidy which his careful landlady had provided, and rose from his chair. He stood upright and folded his arms, and so standing Mr. Wynum looked a good inch and a half taller than his wont. The mental influences that seemingly added to the gentleman's height detracted as suddenly at the least fifteen years from his apparent age. His forehead brightened and became whiter and smoother, irradiated by the emotions that swept wave-like across it. His eyes lighted up with a steady ray, and cast forward a long perspective glance that read a career for his son, such as he, in the days of his young ambition, might have pictured for himself. It was a proud and happy moment for Mr. Wynum—a moment that announced a triumph over fortune, a victory over fate. There was a tumultuous revulsion of feeling within his bosom. Charlie, whom he had so long thought of only as the heir of

his uncle, had proved himself the son of his father. Charlie, whom he was accustomed to think of with a kind of stagnant placidity as a wealthy, dull manufacturer, had stepped forth as a gallant seeker of military fame. Instead of sighing over his son's misadventure in displeasing the wealthy uncle that had adopted him, Mr. Wynum experienced a feeling of triumph in thinking that his son's conduct would prove to his brother that there are, even in members of the same family, essential differences which no training can obliterate, nor any combination of circumstances entirely smother.

On the evening of the day that Mr. Wynum received his son's note he announced to his fair friends at Eva Terrace, and to Mr. Browne, the arrival that he expected.

"Coming to see the Exhibition?" said Miss Maunsell.

"As an exhibitor, no doubt?" said Mrs. Archibald. "Your brother is a great manufacturer."

"No," said Mr. Wynum, gravely; "my son has renounced trade,—in fact, he was never actually engaged in it. He has entered the army."

"Indeed," said Mrs. Archibald. "I was not aware he was studying for the army."

“You never told us,” said Miss Maunsell, more bluntly.

“No,” replied Mr. Wynum, with a slight laugh. “I didn’t know it myself. I never heard anything of it until to-day, when he wrote to say his commission was purchased.”

“Strange,” observed Mr. Archibald, “that you were not consulted.”

This view of the matter had not occurred to Mr. Wynum. He had not been for many years called on to defray any of the expenses connected with his son’s support or education, and he felt he had delegated his parental authority to others. Having surrendered Charlie when nine years old to his uncle’s absolute guidance, and consented to his being brought up to trade, which he had himself renounced, it was not likely Mr. Wynum would now resume his authority in order to find fault with a proceeding on his son’s part which, in his heart, he did not disapprove.

CHAPTER VI.

WHATEVER difficulties may have stood in the way of Charlie Wynum's initiation into military life, they were all fairly overcome, and he was a cornet in Her Majesty's service. Within ten days of the receipt of the note announcing Charlie Wynum's entrance on a military career he one afternoon drove up to his father's door in a cab, dressed in full regimentals, over which he wore a military cloak. With what pride did his father receive him; how cordially did he shake his hand! He nearly lapsed into continental customs, so strongly did he feel inclined to kiss his son on both sides of the face.

To Mr. Wynum, whose hopes and ambition had long been buried, and a heavy gravestone laid thereon, it was like a resurrection of his own youth to see his son, in the pride of manhood, standing before him. And that son was not a vulgar trader; he was member of an

honourable profession. Mr. Wynum looked with fond admiration on the military uniform, though, whatever light Cornet Wynum borrowed from his professional attire, it would be unjust not to admit that he reflected thereon quite as much as he received.

When father and son were seated, the former rang the bell, and Mrs. Green, who had put on her best cap and a clean apron, appeared.

"Mrs. Green, you can get some lunch for Cornet Wynum."

"Certainly, sir."

"Oh, father, 'tis not long since I breakfasted. I'll just smoke a cigar with you."

"I dine at six, Charlie, and Mrs. Green will have something nice for us."

"Certainly, sir," put in the landlady.

"I ordered dinner for two at the hotel," said the cornet; "you'll dine with me to-day, father? We'll not trouble Mrs. Green."

The landlady protested it would be no trouble, and, being requested to bring some bitter ale, retired curtseying. Then father and son lighted their cigars, and, seated one on either side of the fire-place, whiffed away for a few minutes.

"Well, Charlie, my boy," said Mr. Wynum, "you look well in your regimentals. You

took me by surprise: I got no hint of the thing."

"Well, father," said Charlie, apologetically, "you see I was never sure of passing. I didn't get much education when I was young"—he spoke in a low tone—"and it was when I was trying to make up for that I took up the idea of going into the army. I knew my father was a scholar," he added, gaily, "and I wished to become like him."

Mr. Wynum winced a little. His conscience reproached him.

"How did you manage, Charlie? Did your uncle know you were studying for the army?"

"No. At first, I didn't think of the army: I only wished to improve my education. I took lessons in the evening from a private tutor. Uncle knew it, and said I couldn't spend my time better. Uncle always allowed me plenty of money: no stint of that. 'Twas the tutor put the idea of the army into my head. He used to cram fellows for the examinations. He said he could do the same for me. That was the way it began. My French was of great use. 'Twas a good thing for me I was brought up in France. I can speak and write French as well as English. Poor mamma!" He paused.

"Go on, Charlie," said his father.

"Poor mamma always told me I ought to try and become a scholar like papa. Poor mamma! I remember all she used to say to me about it."

"What used she to say about it, Charlie?"

"She said over and over again I ought to study hard, but that I must never trouble you nor tell you anything that would annoy you." Mr. Wynum sighed. "I remember everything as if it happened yesterday."

"So do I," said his father. "Charlie, I like to hear you talk of your mother."

And Charlie went on talking. His narrative showed how his mother had trained him from boyhood to look up to and admire his father, and how she loved and worshipped him herself. Mr. Wynum listened with a sense of voluptuous self-torture to his son's recital. He gloated over the profound tenderness, the fulness of love, that could make a woman utterly oblivious of self; he felt a painful delight in contemplating the deep affection of the wife that could triumph over the strength of maternal instinct. And then came a feeling of something like pride in reflecting that all this self-annihilation was an offering made to him. It was the suttee of the English wife—a pro-

tracted, voluntary martyrdom, contrasted with which, the quickly accomplished cremation of the Hindoo widow was but a momentary pain. Mr. Wynum continued to inflict on himself an egotistical torture as he deliberately passed in review the life of the being whose existence had been so completely absorbed in his; it was a pleasure that could only be experienced by a man of refined intellect, keen sensibility, and ingrained selfishness.

Cornet Wynum ordered a cab, that he and his father might drive to Piccadilly, and Mr. Wynum sent a polite note of excuse to Mrs. Archibald, explaining why he should not be able to attend her whist-table that evening, and asking permission to present his son at her house on the following day. Having dispatched this note by Mrs. Green's little niece, who acted as general servant in the house, Mr. Wynum prepared to descend the staircase, observing to his son that the cab would arrive in a minute or two. Miss Maunsell's door happened to be slightly ajar, Mr. Wynum paused and knocked, and the lady appeared in person. The gentleman apologized, and hoped Miss Maunsell had not been disturbed by any unwonted noise above her head that morning.

“Dear me, sir, not at all.”

“Because,” added Mr. Wynum, “I have had a military visitor this afternoon.”

“My dear sir,” said Miss Maunsell, smiling a most cordial smile, whilst her face glowed with pleasure, “I’ve heard of your happiness. But won’t you walk in?—bless me, I quite forgot; won’t you walk in?”

Miss Maunsell drew back, making a movement of invitation with her hand. Mr. Wynum smiled acquiescence, then turning, looked up the flight of stairs he had descended, called out, “Charlie,” and not receiving an immediate reply, added gaily, “Cornet, Captain, General, you’re waited for.” A ringing laugh replied to this invocation; a quick step was heard on the stairs, and Cornet Wynum reached the landing, his military cloak on his arm, his left hand supporting his sword, to prevent it striking the stairs, and his cap in his right hand. He looked a maiden’s vision of a youthful Mars. Miss Maunsell thought so too, as she caught her first view of Cornet Wynum’s tall and slender figure, of his full blue eyes, bright with health and generous feeling, and the good-tempered smile that played round his well-cut mouth, which his delicate moustache was not yet able to hide.

Cornet Wynum paused a moment on the

landing. His father beckoned him within the door, and requested permission to introduce his son to the lady in whose presence he stood. Miss Maunsell made as deep a curtsy as her height, width, and rheumatic knee-joints permitted. Though old enough to be Cornet Wynum's grandmother, she did not shake hands with him, the fact of her maiden condition being always present to Miss Maunsell's mind, and the sight of the young cornet carried her instantly back half a century in her existence. Ever mindful of the duties of hospitality, the lady rang the bell, and Mrs. Green appeared with a salver, wine, and biscuits. The gentlemen excused themselves—they had had some bitter ale; but Miss Maunsell would not be refused. It was a point of honour that the first time Cornet Wynum entered her apartments he should take a glass of wine. With old-fashioned cordiality, Miss Maunsell poured out the wine herself, and handed a glass to each gentleman, remarking that, though Mr. Wynum was her fellow-lodger, she believed that was only the second or third time he had entered her rooms. Then came the old explanation from the gentleman that, having the honour of meeting his fair neighbour so frequently at the house of Mrs.

Archibald, to whom they were both bound by a common friendship, he hoped more formal visits would be dispensed with. The mention of Mrs. Archibald's name brought Miss Maunsell to remark how glad her friend would be to see Cornet Wynum. With such remarks and some general observations from the lady on the climate of India, the courage of soldiers, and the ferocity of tigers, more than half an hour glided away. Mrs. Green's small female relative had announced the arrival of the cab some twenty minutes before, but the petty intruder had been warned away by a wave of Miss Maunsell's hand. That good lady's wine was as good and as real as herself—none of the modern free-trade doctored stuff,—and the glasses were of a capacity that allowed you to take something like a mouthful, on which to pronounce an opinion, and a second to test the correctness of the first, and a third to corroborate your assertion, leaving still a remainder for silent enjoyment.

Mr. Wynum had taken a second glass of wine, his hostess had done the like, and the cornet had handed the biscuits round a second time, when at length these hospitalities and festivities came to a close. Mr. Wynum remembered the cab had been waiting a long

time, and that he, with his son, were to call on a friend at the United Service Club; he also recollected that dinner was ordered at the Bath Hotel for five o'clock. His memory suddenly invaded by such a host of facts, Mr. Wynum rose. Miss Maunsell shook hands with him, and, thawed by the genial influences that had prevailed during the visit, she conferred the like honour on Cornet Wynum, who went off delighted with Miss Maunsell, his father, himself, and the world in general.

He was only twenty years of age and a one-month-old cornet.

CHAPTER VII.

WHILST Cornet Wynum and his father were spending a quiet evening over their cigars and wine at the Bath Hotel, and whilst Mr. Archibald and his friend Mr. Morton were employed in a similar way at another hotel, Miss Maunsell was descanting loudly on the attractions of the young officer whose acquaintance she had that morning made. The eulogium was pronounced at Mrs. Archibald's whist-table, round which sat, beside the hostess, Miss Maunsell, Miss Morton, and Mr. Browne. In the absence of her brother and cousin, Margaret had taken a hand at whist.

"He's such a handsome young man," so went on the eulogy; "six feet high at least—quite as tall as his father, and so slender, you'd think you could snap his waist in two. I'm sure he can't be very strong, though he looks the picture of health—blooming cheeks and deep-blue eyes."

"Then he's like his mother," observed Mrs. Archibald.

“Not a bit: the image of his father—a beautiful young man.”

“His mother was handsome,” said Mrs. Archibald, softly, as she shuffled the cards.

“Did you think so, dear? I must say I never did. The wonder was,” added the fair speaker, casting down her large, deep-set eyes, and dropping the lids until they nearly touched her cheeks, “the wonder was what could have induced him to marry her—a man that might have commanded any woman.”

“That’s saying a great deal,” observed Mr. Browne.

It was saying a great deal, and Mr. Browne at the moment suspected that the “any woman” meant a positive individual.

“I cannot understand,” said Margaret, as she sorted her cards, “how a man could be in a position to command any woman.”

Margaret Morton was viewing the subject logically and dispassionately; Miss Maunsell thought she spoke ironically, and coloured violently, as she replied,—

“You don’t understand,—it’s not necessary you should”; and then softened down with, “Little girls need not know of such things; their time will come.”

Miss Maunsell was fond of treating Margaret

as a child. Mrs. Archibald, who thoroughly understood her friend's peculiarities, said, with a softly roguish smile,—

“Now, Ellen, did you not refuse him yourself?”

“Never, dear, never,” said Miss Maunsell, smiling brightly, and quite flattered by the suspicion; “it was women much superior to me he could have commanded.”

Mr. Browne caught up the word.

“Miss Maunsell, I would not hear your enemy say so. Women superior to you! where were—where are such to be found?”

“Oh, sir, you're too good!—you flatter.”

And Miss Maunsell again dropped her eyes, as she always did when she wished to be impressive.

“Margaret,” said her aunt, “you lead. You're eldest hand.”

“Bless me, I haven't sorted my cards,” exclaimed Miss Maunsell; and snatching them up, she proceeded to her task. Having classified her cards, she inquired what were trumps, and being informed, groaned.

“A bad omen,” said Mr. Browne.

“A ruse, perhaps,” said Mrs. Archibald.

“I hope so,” said Margaret, who was Miss Maunsell's partner.

“No, indeed, dear,” responded the suspected person, casting across the table a beaming glance from her large blue eyes. Miss Maunsell’s anger was only a passing flash ; besides she was now flattered into superlatively good humour.

As these amiable kill-times played long whist, one rubber, especially in the summer months, often filled up their evening. At ten o’clock Mrs. Green called to conduct Miss Maunsell home. Mr. Browne would willingly have escorted the lady, but she, in the lofty purity of her maiden meditations, would accept no other attendant than a female servant. Mr. Wynum, though living in the same house as Miss Maunsell, always gave the lady half an hour’s precedence in returning home of an evening. Mrs. Archibald once remarked to her friend Ellen that she might very well walk home with Mr. Wynum, considering that they lived under the same roof.

“Never, dear, never. What would the world say ?”

Mrs. Archibald did not know, but she had a strong suspicion that the world would say—nothing.

On returning from the Bath Hotel, Mr. Wynum found on his mantel-piece a neatly-

written note. It was from Mrs. Archibald, congratulating him on the arrival of his son, and inviting both to a friendly, unceremonious dinner on the following day.

The invitation was accepted in the same spirit in which it was given. Cornet Wynum made so favourable an impression on Mrs. Archibald, that at parting his hostess invited him to visit her house on the same terms as his father did; that is to say, whenever he pleased.

CHAPTER VIII.

ON the day that Mr. Morton returned from the Continent, Clifton, his aunt's faithful maid, also arrived at Eva Terrace. Clifton brought with her a little niece who was also her god-daughter, and whom she wished to train as a good servant. Mrs. Archibald advised that the child should be sent to a day-school in the neighbourhood, and said she could live at Eva Terrace, where she would be under her aunt's care. Clifton was grateful; but this was only one amongst many benefits she had received from her mistress. Mrs. Archibald was really attached to Clifton. Services, that had extended over more than a quarter of a century, had rendered Clifton indispensable to her mistress. It was with the consciousness of making a great sacrifice that Mrs. Archibald had consented to the four weeks' absence requested by Clifton. It was now a pleasure to the old friends that frequented Eva Terrace

to see Clifton again moving about the house. Her staid, orderly appearance inspired a feeling of security; one could not help thinking everything was sure to be right under Clifton's superintendence. It was refreshing to see her of a morning in her neat print gown, turned back at the top of the corsage, displaying the regularly folded white neckerchief beneath. And at whatever period of the day you might chance to meet Clifton, you always saw her in a respectable cap, bordered with good washing lace, and placed quite on her head. Clifton abhorred the flimsy finery of modern London servants, who give some shillings for an oblong scrap of unwashable material covered with blowsy ribbon or tawdy flowers, which fine composition is worn till it becomes grimy, when it is flung into the dust-bin and replaced by another equally unserviceable, to be worn first in unbecoming flauntiness and afterwards in disreputable dirt.

Clifton, on her return to Eva Terrace, soon began to find fault with changes that had taken place there during her absence. Amongst these were Cornet Wynum's morning calls. Clifton ventured on a few hints to her mistress; but though she approached the subject with great delicacy, she was instantly checked by Mrs.

Archibald, who never allowed a servant to assume the character of adviser. But though she cut short Clifton's observations, she nevertheless profited by the hints conveyed, and on the following morning, about half-past eleven, descended to the library. She found there her niece, nephew, and Cornet Wynum. The latter had now an opportunity of presenting to the lady of the house, in person, the bouquet which had lain for the previous half-hour on the table. Mrs. Archibald saw at a glance how the case stood. Cornet Wynum admired Miss Morton, and her brother regarded his attentions with a friendly feeling. Mrs. Archibald experienced a feeling akin to alarm. Had Henry and Richard quarrelled? was her first mental inquiry. She was perplexed, but the real position might have been easily explained. Henry Morton, though he scarcely acknowledged it to himself, was annoyed with Richard Archibald, on the score of many small offences, which taken altogether made up an aggregate of considerable magnitude. It was under the influence of this irritation that Henry Morton began to question the wisdom, and indeed the respectability, of the tacit understanding that existed between his aunt and Richard Archibald, by which the latter was regarded as the

destined husband of Margaret. And it was this same undefined sense of irritation that gave a strong zest to the pleasure he experienced in witnessing the young cornet's admiration for his sister. If the truth must be told, Henry Morton was glad to see the ground being cut from under Richard Archibald.

Cornet Wynum had taken his departure, taking with him Mrs. Archibald's compliments to his father, and her expressed hope of seeing both father and son the same evening. After lunch, Henry Morton was asked by his aunt, if he could afford her half an hour's chat. He was quite at her service, and, presenting his arm, he conducted her to the drawing-room.

Having taken her customary comfortable place on the sofa, and beckoned her nephew to draw his chair beside her, Mrs. Archibald began,—

“My dear Harry, you know how averse I am to talking of business, how unequal I am to any great exertion. My dear Harry,” with a wave of the hand, “pray allow me to go on. I have made up my mind to speak to you. Need I remind you that you are the eldest son of my only brother, whom, until I became a wife, I loved more than any human being after I lost my father and mother? Need I

remind you that Richard Archibald is the nephew of my husband, for whom my love exceeded all I had borne to parents and brother? Now, Harry, Richard and you ought to be equally dear to me. If you are not, if I sometimes feel a preference for the son of my brother, perhaps I reproach myself. I would wish to regard you both in exactly the same light. Now, Harry, what is the cause of this dissatisfaction with Richard which you so plainly showed to-day, and what does this praising of Cornet Wynum mean?"

Henry Morton was taken quite aback by his aunt's address; for address it was, and delivered in slow and measured terms. He did not speak for a few minutes, but he then looked frankly up. "Aunt, as you have spoken, I'll tell you what it is. I *am* dissatisfied with Dick. He takes too much on him,—and then the way he treats Margaret!"

"What do you mean, Harry?"

"Surely, aunt, you see yourself; he treats her as if he had a right to command her, as if she were intended for him, as if she were brought up to be his wife. Margaret is a girl that need not be cut out for any one. There are hundreds of men that would be proud to marry her. Besides, aunt, though she has no

fortune from her father, I intend to give her one."

"You're very generous, Harry," said his aunt, in a faint voice.

"No, aunt, excuse me. 'Tis not generosity ; 'tis justice. Why should I take everything? When the Indian business is cleared, and begins to pay, and when the estate is purchased, I shall be a rich man, and able to give my sister a handsome dowry. She's not obliged to marry Richard Archibald. She can make her own choice. I'm sure, aunt, much as you love your nephews, you think as much of your niece."

"I think, Harry, I have proved that."

"My dear aunt, nobody knows it better than I; nobody feels it more than Margaret."

"I really think your uncle was fonder of Margaret than of Richard. But, Harry, have you been talking of these matters to Margaret?"

"Certainly not, aunt."

"'Twould pain me deeply if you did. But now, Harry, answer me frankly. Has there been a quarrel between you and Richard?"

"No, aunt; none at all."

"Then why the temper you showed this morning?"

“Did I show temper? ’Twould be no wonder if I did. Dick assumes great authority. He’s so self-conceited. He thinks nobody knows anything but himself. He’s always boasting of his knowledge of the law, as if eating a dozen dinners were a great feat. He tries to put every one down; but he shan’t put me down. If it goes to education, I got as much as he. Besides, aunt, you know all the mischief done to our family was done by Dick’s father.”

“But Dick couldn’t help that.”

“No; but it ought to make him modest. What a great deal of money my father lost! What a great deal uncle lost! I think it hurried them both out of the world.”

“Oh, Harry, Harry! Pray don’t refer to the past. ’Tis more than I can bear.”

“My dear aunt, I beg your pardon; but ’tis all Dick’s fault.”

He stopped short, and looked at his aunt. She was leaning back on the sofa, with her hand across her eyes. Henry Morton was grieved. He took his aunt’s disengaged hand, and pressed it between both his.

“My dear aunt, I beg your pardon; I beg your pardon. I’ve been talking like a foolish school-boy. I’m quite ashamed of myself.

Pray forgive me." And he drew his aunt's hand from before her eyes.

"My dear Harry, I'm not angry nor annoyed. I was only thinking how very like your father you are—so impulsive, so warm-hearted."

And Mrs. Archibald smiled affectionately on her nephew.

Henry Morton stood up, took a turn twice across the room, and returned to his seat.

"'Pon my word, aunt, I think I'm very silly. I hope you won't take notice of anything I've said."

"All you have said, Harry, is not silly. It has set me thinking, and now we'll talk seriously. What did you mean this morning by praising Cornet Wynum, and disparaging Richard, and seeming to couple both their names with Margaret's?"

"Well, I meant nothing particular; but"—after a pause—"by Jove, 'tis diverting to see how much in love with Margaret that young Wynum is."

"Harry, Harry! surely you do not wish to make your sister an object of ridicule."

"Certainly not, aunt; but I *do* like to see young Wynum in love with Meg. 'Tis the first time she ever got any real admiration, I

think. Dick Archibald pays her no attention, except to order her to work for him."

The last phrase was spoken with warmth. Henry Morton was again working himself into anger against his cousin.

"Henry," said Mrs. Archibald, gravely, "your words imply a reproach to me. Had I thought there was the slightest probability of Cornet Wynum's falling in love, as you call it, with Margaret, I would never have invited him to my house."

"But, aunt, what could the young fellow do? Of course he fell in love. If Meg went more into society you'd see hundreds of young fellows falling in love with her."

"I should be very sorry to see my niece a target for staring vulgarity."

Mrs. Archibald was now annoyed; but, quickly recovering herself, she sat more upright on her couch and looked straight at her nephew.

"Harry, have you any objection to looking forward to the possibility of Margaret becoming one day Richard's wife?"

"No, aunt, I have not; but I don't like the idea of Meg being offered to him."

"Oh, Harry, for shame! No woman of our family has ever been offered to any man."

“Of course not, aunt, of course not; but Dick acts as if he were sure of my sister.”

“Harry, you force me to speak more plainly than I had intended to. When your dear uncle and I took charge of Richard and Margaret, we treated them, as far as an uncle and aunt could do, like our own children. We gave them like training, as far as was compatible with the difference between boy and girl, and, if we formed the wish, or looked forward to the possibility, of seeing them at some future time more to each other than cousins, it was entirely with a view to their happiness. We endeavoured to do our duty to both.”

“Oh, aunt! there could be no better mother than you have been to Margaret, but—”

“Stay, Harry. In looking forward to this possible union between Richard and Margaret it was always with the understanding that Margaret should be free to accept or reject her cousin. She was not to be controlled in her choice.”

“Of course not, aunt.”

“But, on the other hand, neither was Richard to be bound in any way. He too was to have a liberty of choice.”

“I wish he ’d choose somebody else.”

“Now, Harry, don’t be impetuous. Do you think Richard an unsuitable husband for Margaret?”

No answer. Mrs. Archibald went on.

“Do you not think that two persons educated in the same principles, trained in the same way from childhood, would be likely to make each other happy in married life? Do you not think there is a better chance of happiness in such a marriage than can be expected from one of these hap-hazard matches founded on a ball-room acquaintance? I confess I’ve always looked with a certain amount of favour on the Continental system, where parents select the future son- or daughter-in-law. Parents understand the disposition of their children better than they do themselves, and know better what would make them happy in their future homes. Your uncle and I—I speak to you in the strictest confidence, Harry—looked forward with pleasure to the prospect of a marriage between Richard and Margaret. We believed it would be for their happiness; we knew it would be for their benefit. Richard, you know, is his uncle’s heir, and Margaret has no money.”

“Aunt,” said Henry Morton, very gravely, and looking steadfastly in Mrs. Archibald’s

face, "have you disclosed your views on this subject to Richard?"

During the previous twenty years so strong a flush had not visited Mrs. Archibald's face as now dyed it from brow to chin. She did not immediately reply to her nephew. She wished to recover her self-possession completely before she spoke.

"Harry, as Margaret's brother, I recognize your right to ask the question; but it seems like wishing to deprive me of the position which I have always held with regard to Margaret—that of a mother."

"Oh, my dear aunt! how could you think so?"

"Harry, 'tis quite plain. Your rights over Margaret are stronger than mine. You're her natural protector; I'm only an adoptive mother."

"My dear aunt, you wrong me. No such thoughts crossed my mind. When I asked if you had spoken to Richard as you have to me, it was merely from a desire to know how things stood."

"You're right, Harry, quite right. I *have* spoken to Richard; and, giving you this confidence, I must give you another, which may look like a breach of trust, but which I confide

to your honour. Richard loves Margaret, and looks forward to making her his wife, as the reward of his hard studies and all the struggles he has before him."

Henry Morton was silenced but not satisfied.

"Don't you think, aunt, he has a very curious way of showing his love?"

"Harry, I must now speak to you about what, as a young man, you possibly don't understand. I've brought up Margaret as the women of our family have always been brought up. I have reared her in that purity of modest reserve which is only another name for innocence. Harry, I'm sure you wouldn't like to see your sister walking about with a young man, even though he might be called her cousin. You wouldn't wish to see her rendered conspicuous by being made the object of his attentions in public; above all, you wouldn't like to see her sunk to the degradation of being engaged in what's called a flirtation, but which in my opinion deserves a much stronger name."

"Aunt, you horrify me. I'd rather see my sister dead."

"Well, Harry, to preserve Margaret in the full dignity of woman's unsullied purity, I extracted a promise from Richard that he

would never by look or word endeavour to awaken in Margaret's mind an idea of love. When he should be in a position to marry he could come to me: now he can go to you and formally ask Margaret's hand, she being free to accept or refuse as she pleases. So now, Harry, you see that whilst you thought I was considering only Richard's interests or likings, I have been in reality guarding Margaret's."

"My dear aunt, you have been indeed a mother to her. How can we ever repay you?"

"I hope, Harry, you feel satisfied."

"More than satisfied, aunt. I'm quite happy."

"Harry, a word about Cornet Wynum. What would you imply by talking of his admiration for Margaret?"

"Really, aunt, I don't know. A young fellow always admires a handsome girl when he sees her. 'Tis quite natural. I do it myself. I've admired hundreds of girls, but never thought of marrying any of 'em."

"You give a nice account of yourself, Harry," said his aunt, laughing.

"Well, aunt, 'tis the same with all young men. Girls like it. They don't expect anything serious."

"That's precisely one of the customs of our

modern English society which I detest, and which I think has tended to lessen the respect for women in this country. Harry, would you like to see your sister conduct herself as those girls did whom you say you admired?"

"I should be very, very sorry to see Meg go on in that way, aunt."

"Very well, Harry. But we must be just to others as well as to ourselves. Would it be just on your part to look approvingly on Cornet Wynum's admiration of your sister?"

"But he can't help it. You know, aunt, I told you I've admired hundreds of girls."

"But you also told me they were not like Margaret. Now, Harry, let me speak to you from the eminence of my experience. The man who seriously cultivates admiration for a girl such as Margaret, or for such a woman as I think she will become, does not easily forget her. Therefore I think it would be unjust in you or me to encourage Cornet Wynum's admiration for Margaret. However, as far as it has gone yet, it is too superficial to demand serious notice. Besides, Cornet Wynum leaves England within a month. As far as Margaret is concerned it is only one of those little social conquests to which every woman is entitled."

“Just so, aunt, just so. That ’s what I felt, but I didn’t know how to express it.”

“Harry, be so good as to hand me that geranium.” And Mrs. Archibald leaned back languidly.

Harry lifted the pot, and, having placed it on a small table near his aunt, strolled to the window.

“A carriage has stopped at the door, I think,” said Mrs. Archibald.

Her nephew went into the back drawing-room which looked upon the road, made his observation and said,—

“Yes, there ’s a brougham at the door.”

Clifton presented herself a minute after with the intelligence that the brougham was come.

“What brougham, Clifton?” asked her mistress.

“The brougham Miss Margaret ordered, ma’am. She thought a drive in the Park would do you good this sunny day.”

“I think so too, Clifton. Fetch my shawl and bonnet, and ask Miss Margaret to get ready whilst the brougham goes round for Miss Maunsell. You see, Harry”—turning to her nephew—“Margaret is quite a daughter to me.”

The brougham soon returned, bringing Miss Maunsell. Mr. Morton handed in his aunt and sister, and took his departure for the city.

Mrs. Archibald, on whom Clifton's remarks of the morning had not been lost, had formed a plan of action which she was only waiting an opportunity to carry into effect. As her brougham drove towards the Serpentine, Miss Maunsell saluted two ladies who were walking slowly on the sward. After a few minutes Mrs. Archibald said,—

“That was Madame Charleroi you saluted, Ellen. She's very prepossessing, and dresses with great taste.”

“She wouldn't be a Frenchwoman if she did not.”

“Who was that young lady with Madame Charleroi? She has no daughter, I believe.”

“No. That's Miss West; a very nice girl. Her father is a very agreeable man. I sometimes meet him when I make a morning call at Madame Charleroi's.”

“My dear Ellen,” said her friend, “what you said the other day made a great impression on my mind. I recognized your good sense and good feeling.”

“My dear creature,” exclaimed Miss Maunsell, “my good sense? Where can that come from?”

“Your good feeling is known to all your friends, Ellen, and to me in particular. Of your good sense I've had many proofs. You

have often said my stay-at-home habits make me seem unneighbourly. You're quite right. But worse, I feel I've been unjust both to you and to Margaret."

"My dear creature, you make me feel quite guilty."

"I intend to repair my past errors. Returning, we shall call on Miss Keel, and you shall then hear my proposition."

The ladies on their homeward drive called on Miss Keel. Mrs. Archibald, in the sweetest tones, asked as a favour that Miss Keel, instead of talking French at her own house of a morning with Monsieur Claude, would introduce that gentleman at Eva Terrace, where her nephew and Cornet Wynum, who both spoke French well, would be glad to make his acquaintance. "And, Ellen," went on the speaker, "if you would promise to come I think I would make an effort and rise early to furbish up my French."

"I'm delighted, dear, to hear you say so. I'm really delighted."

Mrs. Archibald and her party took leave of Miss Keel, leaving that simple-minded creature much pleased in the belief that her praises of Monsieur Claude had worked favourably, and that Mrs. Archibald was about to lay aside the

pride and exclusiveness which Miss Keel knew by experience were amongst her strongest characteristics. Miss Maunsell congratulated herself in the conviction that she had at length won "that dear creature" from the solitude and loneliness to which she had so long consigned herself. Margaret Morton was neither surprised nor deceived. She only wondered that her aunt could take so much trouble for an object which did not seem to her worth the pains.

There was a very merry meeting the following morning at Eva Terrace. Miss Maunsell bustled into the library a little after ten o'clock; Miss Keel and Monsieur Claude next put in an appearance, and soon after Mrs. Archibald presented herself. Great was Cornet Wynum's surprise when, some minutes before eleven o'clock, he was shown into the assembly, and equally great would have been Henry Morton's astonishment at the sight of so many visitors at such an hour had not his sister previously told him what had passed at Miss Keel's on the previous day.

"It strikes me," said Henry Morton, after hearing what his sister had to say, "that aunt is afraid of Richard. I hope you're not, Meg."

“I’m not afraid of any one. I’ve nothing to be afraid about.”

“I wish I were out of this mess, Meg. I’m confoundedly annoyed.”

“What mess?”

“I’m condemned to idleness, and all through Dick’s fault. We owe him nothing, Meg. He is as bad to us as his father was.”

Margaret made no observation, and her brother, feeling his temper rising, walked into the garden and began to smoke. He had not been long occupied in this healthful exercise when the members of the *séance* began to arrive, but Mr. Morton continued his promenade, occasionally stepping into the library to salute a new-comer, or to ask one of the gentlemen to join him in a cigar. It was only after repeated invitations Cornet Wynum accepted the invitation. He was glad to ventilate his astonishment and confusion in the open air, and he was especially glad to walk with Miss Morton’s brother.

Meanwhile the members of the *séance* went on speaking French, largely interspersed with English, and laughing at their own mistakes, till Monsieur Claude offered to read aloud; then the ladies took up their knitting and needlework and became very quiet, and

expressed many thanks when, at a quarter to twelve, the reader said he must retire, having an appointment with his father at the Exhibition. Miss Keel soon after left, because her mother dined early; Cornet Wynum, who carried within him a secret sense of guiltiness, as if conscious of being the cause of all this domestic confusion, remembered, at an unusually early hour, that his father would be expecting him, and Henry Morton remembered he owed a visit to Mr. Wynum.

Mrs. Archibald told Miss Maunsell, who remained to lunch, that she was greatly pleased with the morning's proceedings. And so she was. She believed things were now in a train that would quietly and securely accomplish the end she had in view. And such would probably have been the result, were it not that counter-mine, of whose existence Mrs. Archibald had no suspicion, suddenly exploded and created much confusion.

To explain how this occurred it will be necessary to enter into some details respecting a personage who has been hitherto mentioned only incidentally in this narrative.

CHAPTER IX.

THE genius that presides over “chance” must have specially affectioned Mrs. Green, for nothing occurred in that lady’s neighbourhood worthy her notice—and to her philosophic mind few things were so trifling as to be undeserving attention—which was not by favour of the deity Chance brought within the range of her observation. Indeed, the power called Chance might, viewing her relations with Mrs. Green, be supposed to have contracted a matrimonial alliance, and changed her name to Certainty; for certain it was that Mrs. Green knew—not the mere gossip of the locality, not the uncertified *on dits* that might satisfy a special correspondent, printed one day, and contradicted the next—but the exact facts as they occurred under the roofs, and even in the private chambers, of large portions of the population of St. Mary Abbott’s, Kensington. It spoke volumes for the modesty of

Mrs. Green that she did not arrogate to herself any personal credit for the vast amount of general information she possessed, and of which she was able to keep up a constant and accurate supply. On the contrary, so far from pluming, she always seemed inclined to depreciate, herself, making it appear as though she were merely an instrument—a kind of telegraphic wire—used by some higher intelligence for the transmission of information. This intelligence Mrs. Green designated Chance, and it would require no great effort of imagination to believe that the power thus named must have taken permanent lodgings in the locality where she was kept so busy. “I learned it by chance,” such was the modest form which Mrs. Green flung like a veil over her many discoveries, and which concealed from the eyes of superficial observers the quick perception, close attention, and untiring activity which she was constantly bringing to bear upon the external world.

And Mrs. Green was no niggard of the information of which she became mistress. No society for the diffusion of knowledge, useful or otherwise, could be more zealous for the dissemination of its tenets than was Mrs. Green for the transfusion of intelligence on the

topics brought within her special sphere. As those who have partaken of puddings are alone in a position to speak authoritatively of their excellence, so it was only those who by long experience had tested the correctness of Mrs. Green's general information that could do justice to the fulness and accuracy of the same. But Mrs. Green, humble and unobtrusive in discharging the duties of the important agency entrusted to her by her great patron, had nevertheless acquired amongst all who had the happiness of her acquaintance a reputation which many higher placed in society might have envied. "I had it from Mrs. Green" was a reply capable of silencing the doubts and satisfying the understanding of the most sceptical lodging-house keeper, cook, or housemaid in Kensington when intelligence of an unwonted and extraordinary character was offered to the hearer.

Amongst the favoured recipients of the early and general intelligence possessed and propagated by Mrs. Green Miss Maunsell held the highest place. It was a strong evidence of Mrs. Green's sense of duty that her mistress was thus distinguished. At the same time justice to Miss Maunsell demands the admission that the attention with which she always

received Mrs. Green's communications, and the good service she did in propagating the same, earned the preference thus bestowed.

It happened that Mrs. Green, as she one morning "by chance" passed along Eva Terrace, saw Cornet Wynum enter Mrs. Archibald's house. As it was not then quite eleven o'clock, she could not help noting the circumstance, and was forcibly reminded of the fact when, about one o'clock, the military gentleman arrived at his father's lodgings. Mrs. Green was well accustomed to putting two and two together, and thought that as Cornet Wynum called every day at her house about one o'clock, he might possibly call every day at Mrs. Archibald's about eleven. She accordingly resolved to turn her observations in that direction.

Much as Mrs. Green might be indebted to chance for the initiative in the greatest discoveries connected with her name, and though she might in her modesty give that fitful deity credit for the entire results, we should be doing the accurate-minded woman an injustice did we not here record that she never left matters to the final decision of chance which any exertions of hers could transfer to the domain of certainty. And, Mrs. Green having

in this truly scientific spirit made a sufficient number of observations to convince herself that Cornet Wynum's morning visits to Eva Terrace were the results of law, not the offspring of accident, she pronounced the matter worthy of further inquiry.

It was half-past seven o'clock and a fine evening, in the end of July. Clifton, her household duties over, was seated in her room at needlework, and opposite sat Mary, the housemaid, engaged in the same way. Clifton's sitting-room at Eva Terrace was the front basement, from which she and her coadjutor, Mary, were able to make a tolerably constant and tolerably correct reconnaissance of the passers-by. As the basement story at Eva Terrace was not quite subterranean, as the window was more than half-way raised above the level of the front garden, the dwellers within were not only favourably posited for seeing what passed without, but escaped the earthy odour which generally pervades such apartments.

On the July evening to which we have referred, and whilst Clifton and Mary were plying their needles as we have stated, the area bell rang. Mary, without leaving her seat, stretched her neck in the direction of the

window, and having recovered her position said, looking at Clifton, "Mrs. Green."

"Oh, let her in."

Mary hurried to undo the gate, and in less than a minute Mrs. Green entered Clifton's room.

"Oh, Mrs. Green, what a pleasure! Mary, set a chair. Mrs. Green, sit down, pray! I'm delighted to see you, and all the more 'tis so long since I had that pleasure."

"'Tis not want of good-will, Mrs. Clifton, that prevented me calling, but I'm so worked; I've so much to do that at times I don't know whether 'tis day or night. But how long 'tis since you gave me a look in!"

"Mrs. Green, you're a householder; you're your own mistress and free to go where you please. I'm only my lady's maid, you know."

"Ah, a householder, indeed! That's a sorrowful state for a poor widow to be in. Rent and rates and taxes hanging over her head every day in the year. 'Twould give one pair of feet enough and more than enough to do to answer tax-gatherers' knocks. And as for house-boots, if the government had any feeling, which of course they haven't, 'twould be only justice to give poor women like me discount off our rates to pay for house-boots that are worn off our

feet, running for ever and ever to open doors for their tax-collectors."

"Come now, Mrs. Green," said Clifton, who, like all ladies' maids, identified herself with the aristocracy, "taxes, you know, must be paid, or how could the country be kept up? And indeed you look well under your burdens."

"Oh, Mrs. Clifton! I don't know how I look, but surely 'tis a pleasure to see you looking so beautiful."

To this flattery Clifton made no other reply than a grave shake of the head. If Clifton did not look beautiful, she looked very respectable in her sober brown dress, her spotless white habit-shirt, and neat linen collar. To complete the homely portrait, Clifton was engaged in the housewifely, old-fashioned occupation of mending stockings.

"And you call yourself my lady's maid," went on Mrs. Green. "'Tis more like a mother you've been to this family, bringing up Mrs. Archibald's nephews and niece for her."

"Well, Mrs. Green, I hope I've done my duty."

"And a great deal more, Mrs. Clifton. That's what I always say when people remark to me how comfortable you're here. 'She deserves it,' I say, 'and more.'"

"Well, I'm sure 'tis very good of you to

speaking that way. I wish Mary was come down, and we'd have a bit of supper. She'll spoil that child. They all spoil her."

"Mrs. Clifton," said her visitor, insinuatingly, "suppose Mary had her supper above with Dumpling"—this a pet name for Clifton's niece—"and waits till the child's quite asleep. 'Tisn't often you and I meet, and we may have a word to say to one another that we don't care young girls to hear. And you won't be offended, dear, I know you won't, for bringing a drop of something cordial with me. Miss Maunsell is a dear good soul, and often says to me, 'Green,' she says, 'we're not growing younger, and we want a little drop of something hot from time to time.' She's a good creature, though she has her little ways, and I must say she often fills my little bottle."

Here Mrs. Green drew from her pocket a small flask, and Clifton, acting on the suggestion of her visitor, cut some bread and cheese, which she put on a plate, and proceeded to Dumpling's room, furnishing herself on the way with a glass of beer. Having arranged that Mary should remain with Dumpling she returned to her sitting-room, and, in addition to the supper already laid out, placed on the table some cold fowl and tongue, fully resolved

to maintain the honour of the house. Hot water and sugar being forthcoming, Mrs. Green mixed two tumblers, with the flavour of which, after some tests, being satisfied, she requested a confirmation of her opinion from Clifton. This was quickly done, and, preliminaries being arranged, the actual work of supper began. A suspension of oral exchange of thought followed, but was not of long duration. Some of the meats having gone in the designed direction, and some of the hot drink having followed in the same line, Mrs. Green broke silence :—

“ ’Twas by chance, dear, for you know I seldom go outside my own door, but, as I was saying, by chance, I put on my bonnet the other morning and went down to Mrs. Jenkins to inquire after some pieces as was forgot at the mangle. What with one thing and another, and my hand always in my pocket, I can’t have a great stock of table linen, and my people are so particular, nothing is ever clean enough for ’em. And Mr. Wynum now has young men so often to lunch, and when bitter beer’s spilt on the cloth, you can’t put it on again, so I’ve washing and mangling from week’s end to week’s end.”

“ But of course they take it into consideration ? ”

“Well, I must say Cornet Wynum does behave handsome for any trouble he gives, and, indeed, the other gentlemen *are* gentlemen; not but what, if they never put a half-crown into my hand, I’d be glad to see the young cornet so attentive to his poor old father, every morning punctual to come to see him and take him out.”

“He calls very attentive at other places too,” said Clifton; “where I, for one, can tell him he’s not wished for. You’ll say I’m an old fool to be taking things to heart, but I can’t help it. I’ve been a-managing this family for over five-and-twenty years, and natural I’d like to see them I brought up go together to the end. I know I speak out of my turn, but I can’t help it.”

“’Tis quite natural, dear; but you’re not taking anything. I am afraid ’tis not to your liking.”

“’Tis beautiful, dear, ’tis beautiful. I ain’t accustomed to take anything hot of an evening, —nothing but my glass of beer.”

“Well, now, I can’t do without something hot, and I’d take it every evening, if I could afford it; but I can’t. Miss Maunsell’s very kind to me. She’s a good soul, she is, though she has her little crotchety ways. But who’s

without a fault? you say. As we grow old we want something to keep us up; but you're young, Mrs. Clifton."

"No, Mrs. Green, no; I ain't young. Five-and-twenty years' service,—aye, and more,—ages a woman."

"Thirty years is a long time."

"'Tis a long time. And for twenty years of that time I've managed this house and every one in it, and I can tell you, Mrs. Green, I'll manage it still. I know I speak out of my turn, but I'll not have interlopers here."

"And very right too. That's what I said to Mrs. Jenkins. 'Mrs. Jenkins,' says I, 'nothink is done in that house without Mrs. Clifton being at the head and tail of it.'"

"There's things done here, Mrs. Green, that don't please me; but 'twasn't always so. When Mr. Archibald was alive 'twas Clifton here, and Clifton there, and nothing was done without Clifton; but I see a change,—I do. I know I speak out of my turn, but, Mrs. Green, I'll tell you the whole truth—not a drop more for me; well, it must be very little. Oh, that's too much. But as I was saying, when I come back from my sister's wedding, and brought little Dumpling with me—bless her dear little heart!—and when I see the goings on in this house,

where everything was so quiet and respectable for many a day and many a year, I thought it become me to speak; and according when I was doing my lady's toilet in the morning, and putting on her rou—doing everything for her, says I, 'I know, ma'am,' says I, 'that I speak out of my turn'—for, Mrs. Green, it can't be said of me that I ain't respectful to my employers, and to all as what's placed above me—and so I says, 'Ma'am,' says I, 'I know I speak out of my turn, but,' says I, 'I always thought Miss Margaret was intended for Master Richard.' Oh, Mrs. Green, I was caught up as quick as if I was a-going to set the house afire. I see the change at once; but I'll not be put down, Mrs. Green. 'Twasn't so in master's time, and it shan't be so now. I know I speak out of my turn, but what I say I'll stand by."

Clifton was now heated, and forgot her habitual prudence. Mrs. Green looked steadily at her for a few seconds, then shook her head with a compassionate air.

"'Tis a bad return, Mrs. Clifton, for your long services. We may as well finish this; 'tisn't worth while taking a little drop home. But, Mrs. Clifton, we mustn't mind getting a bad return, and we're not dead yet."

“Oh, them’s dead that thought a great deal of Clifton. ’Twas always, ‘Clifton,’ ‘Clifton,’ with poor Mr. Archibald. ‘Clifton,’ he used to say, ‘you’ll do this for a surprise for your mistress,’ and I’d do it. Another time ’twas, ‘Clifton, I’ve got a cold; you must try to get me out of it, without telling your mistress.’ Poor dear gentleman, if he’d took Clifton’s advice, he’d ’ave got out of his last cold, and been alive to-day. He wasn’t the man to ’ave red-coats and Frenchmen in his house. A real English gentleman; I’ll say that for ’im. I don’t like foreigners, Mrs. Green, I never did; and as for red-coats, I can’t abide ’em. When I was a young girl, I’d run miles if I see one a-coming down the street.”

“Ah, Mrs. Clifton, that’s not the way with young girls nowadays. ’Tis them as runs after the red-coats, more than the red-coats after them.”

“Well, Mrs. Green, so much the worse; ’twas never my way.”

“Why, bless my heart, Mrs. Clifton, here’s half-past ten, and your company above not stirring, and I out of my house.”

“You may as well stop for Miss Maunsell now.”

“I’d rather not. Since the young gentle-

men came she don't want me, and precious glad I'm of it. Mr. Morton and Mr. Archibald brings her home every night, though why she shouldn't come with Mr. Wynum goes beyond me."

"Oh, my dear," said Clifton, drawing herself up with an air of stately propriety, "young ladies can't be too particular."

This sally of Clifton's caused much mirth to herself and friend.

"Well, 'twas the oddest thing in life," says Mrs. Green—"but you'll say odd things are always coming across us—but 'twas the oddest thing, I coming past this door one morning last week, and by chance who should I see but Cornet Wynum going in, and it not eleven o'clock. 'An early visit,' says I, 'for a gentleman to a lady'; and by chance, the same day, I opened the door to him myself, for my little Frances was upstairs, and 'twas one o'clock. 'A pretty long visit,' says I, to myself, 'this young gentleman's made, and I wonder who 'tis for, for I know Mrs. Archibald's not out of her room at eleven o'clock, nor at twelve o'clock neither.' But you say there's nothing in it, Mrs. Clifton."

"There's nothing in it, Mrs. Green; and what's more, there shan't be anything in it.

I know as what was my master's wishes, and I'll carry 'em out."

"Oh, Mrs. Clifton! if you say it 'twill be done."

"Be you sure of that. I know I speak out of my turn; but I'll do my master's wishes to the last."

"Bless me, if 't isn't just eleven. I'm safe to meet my young lady and your young gentleman on the road. Good night, dear, good night. You'll come to see me soon. Won't Mary say I'm a gossip?"

It is highly probable that Mary had already said so several times; and as she now entered Clifton's sitting-room, with a pale yawning face, it might be concluded that the visitor of the evening had afforded her no special gratification.

"The bell's rung, Mary, and I'm going up," said Clifton. "I'll bring Miss Maunsell to the dressing-room. I shan't come down immediately. You open the door."

Having given her instructions, Clifton went upstairs, and having conducted Miss Maunsell to and from the dressing-room, returned thither to make arrangements for her mistress's night toilette. The visitors had departed, and Mrs. Archibald entered her dressing-room. As

Clifton, from prudential motives, was unusually silent that night, her services were soon completed; so having seen her mistress to bed, and having ascertained that all who were to pass the night at Eva Terrace were safe under the roof, Clifton fastened the house-door, examined all the bolts and bars of the basement story, and finally retired to her own sleeping-apartment.

CHAPTER X.

ON the following morning, and whilst Clifton was occupied in her ordinary domestic duties, she could not banish from her mind recollections of the previous evening. And these recollections were not of an agreeable character. Clifton was in the rare position of an unprejudiced mind sitting in judgment on itself; and Clifton, in her unbiassed rectitude, pronounced herself guilty. She pronounced herself guilty of great indiscretion in having talked so freely of her mistress's affairs, an indiscretion for which she could only account by thinking she must have been bewitched; and having arrived at that conclusion, she went on in a plaintive monologue to liken herself to a squeezed lemon from which all that could be extracted had been drawn; she further compared herself to a piece of thread twisted round the finger of Mrs. Green, and knotted and unknotted according to the fancy

of that lady, and then flung aside when no longer wanted. Clifton solemnly pronounced herself guilty of folly in having submitted so easily to be pumped by that "serpentine" Mrs. Green; but whilst thus condemning herself, she felt no resentment, or very little, against the person who had thus squeezed, twisted, knotted, and pumped her; on the contrary, the sentiments she entertained for Mrs. Green were those of profound respect, touched with a slight admixture of fear. She recognized the ability of her late visitor, and acknowledged that the reputation she enjoyed was well earned.

After an early dinner, Clifton gave Mary permission to spend the afternoon in the Park, where Dumpling would be amused with the sight of the carriages and finely-dressed folks. This movement having been effected, and Clifton, seeing in perspective a couple of leisure hours before her, sat down to pursue the train of thought which her avocations of the morning had partially interrupted. Though she had felt humbled and annoyed upon a revision of what had passed between her and Mrs. Green, she was not afraid to return to the subject, wisely considering that in close reflexion on our defeats we often find the

elements of future success. Whilst Clifton mourned over the fact of having been entrapped into admissions that discredited her prudence, she acknowledged she had indirectly acquired information that might help to the accomplishment of a project near to her heart. Having revolved all the conditions of the case in her mind, she resolved on the next step she should take, and rejoiced that the contemplated next step would bring her face to face, not with the "serpentine" Mrs. Green, but with the rational-minded Mr. Richard Archibald.

About half-past seven in the evening, Clifton took up her post at the front basement-window. She was neatly and respectably dressed, as was her custom ; but it must be added that her attention was not as steadily fixed as usual on the piece of needle-work in her hand. The toils of the day were over, the morning visitors had come and gone ; Mrs. Archibald and her niece had taken a drive in the Park, had returned and dined ; the customary evening visitors had arrived, with one exception, and this exception was the cause of Clifton's impatient watching. It was a quarter past eight.

"He'll be here soon, if he's to come at all," said Clifton ; "and I must say 'tis a bad plan to leave the field free to others."

Clifton put her work aside, left the room, and went round through the passage that led to the area. She had scarcely time to get outside, when she heard on the pavement above a quick, determined step, which she instantly recognized. Clifton ran up the area steps, and confronted Mr. Archibald before he had time to ring.

“Good evening, Clifton; good evening.”

“Good evening, Mr. Richard. You’re rather late.”

“Oh, time enough, Clifton; time enough.”

“Yes, sir; always welcome, whatever the hour is.”

Whilst this little dialogue was going on, Clifton fumbled at the lock of the gate, which she at length opened slowly.

“Good evening, sir,” said Clifton, in answer to the gentleman’s salutation. “I suppose, Master Richard, you wouldn’t come down the area steps to see how we are?”

“Indeed I will, Clifton, with all my heart; though I remember the time when you’d have boxed my ears if I ran down the area steps.”

And so saying, Richard Archibald ran lightly down, and Clifton followed.

“Well, Clifton, you’re very comfortable here,” said Mr. Archibald, when seated in the

housekeeper's room. "But everything is comfortable where you are. Why, Clifton, you're a mother to us all."

"Them's the very words your dear uncle often said, and that's what I'd wish to be to you all. But I've got no wish to be a mother to strangers, and to them as what's nothing to the family I've served since I was fifteen."

"Quite right, Clifton, quite right. But 'tis a long time since you and I had a chat together. How are you getting on?"

"Oh, Master Richard, everything's well and comfortable with me, though I can't help fretting sometimes."

"Fretting! you don't fret, Clifton?"

"Indeed I do, Master Richard. I know I speak out of my turn; but I do fret."

"Impossible, Clifton. Why, you look younger and handsomer than you did twenty years ago, when you often boxed my ears for running down the area steps."

"Well, Master Richard, you do make one laugh, to be sure. I know I speak out of my turn; but I do fret, and 'tisn't for myself, but them as, I may say, I brought up for one another; and now to see strangers pick 'em off, it's what I don't hold with. I know I speak

out of my turn; but I never thought I'd live to see it."

"Well, Clifton, I suppose your sister pleased herself; and if she's happy, that's everything."

"Oh, Master Richard, 'tisn't of my sister I'm thinking; 'tis of others, that maybe aren't of my own blood. I know I speak out of my turn, Master Richard; but if you don't see it, more's the pity."

"I don't see anything, Clifton; but you'll tell me all about it some other time. I must run upstairs now; 'tis late."

"Well, Master Richard, if you don't see, I s'pose 'tis all right. I know I speak out of my turn; but your dear uncle often said to me, 'Clifton,' he used to say, 'I'm bringing up them children for one another.' I know I speak out of my turn, Master Richard, but 'tis for your sake I speak."

"How so, Clifton? What children do you mean?"

"Well, Master Richard, what children could I mean but you and Miss Margaret? I know I speak out of my turn, but I can't help it."

"Make your mind easy, Clifton," and Richard laughed outright. "I'm not married; and though your sister married without your consent, I'll not do so; I'll consult you first

Good night, Clifton." And Mr. Archibald rose from his chair.

"Master Richard, Master Richard, I wish I could open your eyes. I know I speak out of my turn. You're not going to be married; I know that. You can't marry just yet. But I don't want you to lose her as was brought up for you. I don't want to see Miss Margaret carried off by another."

"Clifton," Mr. Archibald spoke gravely, "there's no occasion to mention Miss Margaret's name. Nobody can carry her off."

"Not them as comes every morning talking French here, and him as was intended for her far off and taking no notice? I know I speak out of my turn, Master Richard; but many and many's the time your dear uncle spoke to me about it, and I think I was a faithful servant to him."

"You were, Clifton. But tell me what you mean, and don't mind speaking out of your turn."

"Oh, Master Richard, you're very good, I'm sure. I know I speak out of my turn, but I never liked red-coats, more specially when they comes talking French, and when Miss Margaret, that was never brought up to it, takes such notice. I never heard such a

thing in the house in your uncle's time; and no good will come of it. I know I speak out of my turn, Master Richard, but I can't help it, and no notice took of what I say now."

"Now, Clifton, you're mistaken. The family know you're a friend, and 'tis as a friend we all look on you. Just tell me quickly what you mean, and what you think."

"That's just what I want to, Master Richard. I know I speak out of my turn: and as to mentioning Miss Margaret's name, I'm not the person to do it; but when them as knows the gossip of the neighbourhood mentions it, 'tis time some one as takes an interest in the family should know it. I know I speak out of my turn, Master Richard, but 'tis the truth."

"What can gossips have to say about Miss Margaret?"

"Well, sir, about her and Cornet Wynum. I know I speak out—"

"For Heaven's sake, Clifton," interrupted Mr. Archibald, angrily, "do tell me what you mean, without this infernal nonsense."

Clifton affected to be startled by Mr. Archibald's burst of temper, but she was secretly pleased, knowing that his deep-seated egotism prevented his seeing, even where his interests

were concerned, what was patent to surrounding eyes. Clifton then, and speaking as little as possible out of her turn, related her observations and conjectures; and as Richard Archibald listened, the blood boiled in his veins. The prize, of which he felt so secure as that he hardly deemed it a prize, was being wrested from his grasp, and that, too, under circumstances that added odium to the loss. Not only was Margaret Morton being wooed and won by another, but the story of that other's conquest and of his own defeat was being made the subject of vulgar gossip. And how had Henry Morton behaved? It was plain he connived at what was going on. It was even doubtful whether his aunt was not in the league formed against him. At that moment the whole world seemed arrayed against him. All his passions were roused. His self-love and his pride were wounded to the quick. Were not his prudence and the all-provident forecast on which he prided himself set at nought? And by whom? By an almost beardless boy. A red-coat, with blue eyes and fair hair, had done it. And was Margaret Morton to be caught by such glitter? Richard Archibald laughed, as he mentally answered the mental inquiry. But this was only another

way of saying that the woman who had been so long acquainted with him could never stoop to admire a young cornet, however red his coat or blue his eyes.

Mr. Archibald had frequently turned red and pale before Clifton came to the end of her story. He questioned her minutely as to facts, and cross-examined her with lawyer-like closeness about collateral circumstances, until the whole affair stood clearly out before his eyes.

All having been said that could throw further light on the case in question, there was a pause. Richard Archibald looked straight before him, without noting Clifton, who sat at the other side of the table. It was plain that angry thoughts were revolving in his mind. His face sometimes flushed, and sometimes the colour subsided to return again with a sudden rush to cheek and brow. At last he rose hastily from his chair.

"I'll go this moment to my aunt, and have an explanation."

"Master Richard, Master Richard, you'll do nothing of the kind"; and she stepped between him and the door.

"Clifton, let me pass. No one shall oppose me in my uncle's house—in my own house."

"No, Master Richard ; no, dear, no one shall oppose you. 'Tis your own house, but not yet, Master Richard."

Clifton spoke in a subdued voice. Her face was white. She was terrified, as a woman may be who rouses the strong passions of a man.

"You're not hasty, Master Richard ; 'twas never your way, like Master Henry. Besides, Master Richard, you'd ruin me. Your aunt would be so angry. You know her proud ways. I know I speak out of my turn, but 'tis for your good."

Clifton's appeal had more effect than she suspected. Richard Archibald knew his aunt's "proud ways." And then he piqued himself on his self-command. He made a sudden effort to put his vaunted philosophy into practice. He tried to smile, but his lips quivered ; they were white, as was his whole face. He reseated himself.

"Well, Clifton," he began, "you said something about my aunt's being angry with you. Does she approve what's going on in the house?"

"Oh, no, Master Richard, I'm sure she don't, though she took me up very short when I spoke to her. I know I speak out of my

turn, but that's her way. You know she's proud. I know I speak out of my turn; but this I'll say, she don't like the goings on in this house. But what can she do? Maybe she don't think it worth while to speak. Cornet Wynum will be soon going to India, everybody says."

"Confound everybody! What has anybody to do with my affairs?"

"Very true, Master Richard; but the mischief might be done before he goes."

"Confound him! I'll speak to my aunt this very night," cried Mr. Archibald, looking furious.

"No, Mr. Richard, you'll not," said Clifton, decisively. "You'd frighten your aunt, and expose yourself before all them above stairs; and you'd ruin me. I know I speak out of my turn, but 'tis for your good."

Here Clifton applied the corner of her apron to her eye, and began to cry.

Richard Archibald remained silent. Clifton's allusion to exposure had weight. He knew that "scenes" are always attended with ridicule, and furnish not alone food for gossip, but for laughter. Mr. Archibald was bred a gentleman, and shrank from having his name, and still more the name of any woman of his

family, mixed with vulgar tittle-tattle. He took out his purse.

"Clifton, have you mentioned to any one what you've now said to me?"

"Not to living mortal, Master Richard."

"Don't speak to any one about these affairs; not even to my aunt. No one that serves me shall lose by it," and Mr. Archibald tried to put some gold pieces into Clifton's hand.

"No, Master Richard. For close on thirty years I've served your aunt faithfully, and I served your uncle up to his death. 'Tis my duty makes me speak. I know I speak out of my turn; but I know what your uncle always wished."

Richard Archibald, after a few minutes' reflection, felt ashamed and subdued.

"Clifton," he said, "tell me what I had best do."

"Well, Master Richard, if you'll take my advice; I know I speak out of my turn, but here's my advice. Go away to-night, without going upstairs; go out by the area, if you don't mind; and come here early to-morrow morning, and speak to your aunt. She'll make everything right with you; I know she will. I know I speak out of my turn, Master Richard, but 'tis for your good."

“ But, should I come here at eleven, aunt won’t expect me, and won’t be up.”

“ Write a line to-night, Master Richard, and put it in the post as you go home.”

“ A good idea, Clifton. Can you give me ink and paper ? ”

“ Certainly, Master Richard.”

The important line having been written, directed, and stamped, Richard Archibald bade Clifton good night, and, under her guidance, made his exit by the area gate, and that not a minute too soon, as Clifton soliloquized, the hour being then more than half-past ten.

CHAPTER XI.

AT about half past eleven on the morning following his exit through the area gate, Richard Archibald made his appearance at Eva Terrace. Clifton received and conducted him to the drawing-room, where he waited his aunt's appearance.

A night's reflection had not been wasted on Richard Archibald. For the first time in his life he had felt the sharp pang of jealousy enter his heart, and the wound, instead of exhausting, had roused the torpid organ into vigorous action. Under the influence of this new sentiment, he saw Margaret Morton in a light in which she had never before appeared to him.

A man born heir to noble estates, into possession of which he came in childhood, enjoys the wide prospect spread before him from infancy upwards with a tranquil, unappreciating dignity which seems incapable of being ruffled; but let his title be disputed, let

the rights of his ancestors be called in question, and what a change takes place in his feelings ! Every blade of grass on his estates, every stone, down to the smallest pebble, acquires immediately an immense value in his eyes, and awakens within him a feeling of affection that at one time the whole property could not have excited.

So with Richard Archibald, as he considered the excellences of Margaret Morton after his conversation with Clifton. Her personal appearance—and she was decidedly handsome—was her least attraction. Had he ever met a woman possessed of intellect so high and so cultivated ? Had he ever met a girl trained in such lady-like sentiments ? And then he thought of his aunt, and he recalled how she had been the great ornament of his uncle's social life as she had been the comfort of his domestic existence, and he felt that a wife trained by her could be no other than a treasure. And he moreover recognized the fact that Margaret was superior to her aunt in intellectual strength and capacity, as well as in mental culture. He knew his uncle had laboured to make Margaret what she was, and chiefly in the design of rearing a wife suitable to him.

In thus contemplating the high qualities of Margaret Morton, Richard Archibald offered a palatable pabulum to his own self-love. He saw his uncle felt that a woman of a lower standard of worth or talent than Miss Morton would not be a meet partner for him. And even in the assumed consanguinity between him and Margaret he found delectation for his vanity: it was only within the circle of his own family that a wife worthy of him could be discovered.

Before morning came, Richard Archibald had arranged everything in his own mind. The sensations he experienced were new, and to a mind endowed with great self-confidence, and consequently always sufficiently calm to note its own emotions, to a certain extent sensational life is pleasurable. Richard Archibald felt this, and smiled as he pooh-poohed Cornet Wynum. A boy! a mere brat! to stand in his pathway. But there were others to consider. Margaret was not to be annoyed, to be molested, in fact sullied, by the admiration of another. The woman destined to be Richard Archibald's wife should never accept a meaner homage than his, or indeed any homage but his.

Whilst this train of thought predominated,

Richard Archibald exulted in a joyous disdain of his supposed rival. Rival! the idea was preposterous: it could exist only in the brain of Cornet Wynum. In these self-assuring sentiments Mr. Archibald had breakfasted and taken a cab; but long before he reached Eva Terrace his thoughts had undergone a revolution. It all at once occurred to him that, in addition to young Wynum, he had others to contend with. And first in the antagonistic list stood Henry Morton. A thousand little circumstances, unnoted at the time of their occurrence, now recurred to his memory, stamped with a significance that gave them gravity. Viewed by the light now cast upon them, these events became evidences of what Richard Archibald was pleased to consider a wide-spread and strong conspiracy against his interests. How did he know to what extent his aunt was implicated? How did he know that she too was not dazzled by a red coat and bright brown hair? Who could say that she, under the influence of a woman's vanity, was not ready to sacrifice her niece?—for sacrifice it would be to marry Margaret Morton to that fair-haired boy.

As Mr. Archibald journeyed along in his cab, he drew up several imaginary indictments

against his aunt and Henry Morton, swore to them, took a brief in the case, and was resolved to defend his client's interests unto the death. And when in his aunt's drawing-room, waiting for her appearance, his vehemence seemed rather to increase than subside. As his anger against his imaginary foes became hotter, so in the same ratio rose his estimate of Margaret Morton. She, the companion of his childhood, she, chosen and trained and fashioned by his uncle to be his wife, was she now to be snatched from his grasp, and both be made unhappy for life? And Richard Archibald laughed bitterly as he thought he discovered the true reason why his aunt had laid down as the rule of his conduct that no breath or murmur of anything like love should pass his lips in his intercourse with his cousin. "Yes," said he, striding angrily through the room, "my aunt compelled me to a silent worship, and left Margaret free. She encouraged me, she taught me to love the girl that I knew was brought up to be my wife; but she kept all thought of me out of Margaret's mind. Aunt has spoken to me with horror, as a sacrilegious profanation, of the looks of impassioned admiration with which men gaze on women they are about to marry; but her niece's

virgin face and heart were not to be sullied by such. And now I remember to have seen young beardless, from some distant corner of the room, follow Margaret with eyes of adoration. By Heavens! I've been fooled. I've lost the only woman that could make me happy, and Margaret is sacrificed. What could she care for a brainless brat like that? Only he's the first to speak: he's allowed to do what was forbidden me. Margaret will find her mistake when she's the wife of a creature she despises, but 'twill be too late; I shall have lost her."

The door opened, and Mrs. Archibald entered.

"My dear Richard, what is the matter? I thought you were engaged in a warm discussion with some one. My dear boy, how hot and excited you look! What is the matter?"

"A great deal, aunt; a great deal's the matter."

"Can I be of any use, Richard? You know all my resources are at your command."

"Oh, aunt, this is not a case where money can avail."

"Richard," said Mrs. Archibald, seating herself on a couch, and trembling with emotion, "pray tell me what's the matter. No disgrace, I hope?"

"Oh, aunt, none, none—no disgrace, cer-

tainly ; but as bad as can be without disgrace. I'll tell you everything."

And Richard Archibald proceeded to recount to his aunt his fears, his suspicions, his jealousy, and his indignation. He did not conceal—he was too excited to conceal anything—that he suspected herself and Henry Morton of being leagued against him.

Mrs. Archibald listened tranquilly to all her nephew had to say. Her first fears as to family disgrace being removed, she experienced a certain amount of satisfaction in finding Richard's jealousy awaked about Margaret. As a woman she had been for some time almost annoyed at the indifference manifested by her nephew towards her niece, and now, believing his jealousy had germinated spontaneously in his own heart, she was much pleased. Greatly as she disliked excitement, she could not conceal from herself that this interview removed some misgivings which had of late crept into her mind. She had begun to think that, whilst she was sedulously guarding Margaret's affections until Richard should be in a position to marry, she might be doing her a wrong, as the blindness of Richard to what was going on about him proved a total indifference to his cousin. Henry Morton's remarks

on a former occasion had of late frequently recurred to her mind, and she had often thought there was some truth in them. But Richard's tale now put things in a different light. Still, though Mrs. Archibald drew this drop of consolation from her nephew's excited and impassioned narrative of his outraged feelings, she was too prudent to say so. She first reassured him as to her own sentiments, and pointed out that, with her for an auxiliary, he had not much to fear. There certainly were things, within the limits she had already prescribed, which he might do, and which she left entirely to the dictates of his own sentiments. As to Henry Morton's feelings about the affair, that was a question which they must settle between themselves as gentlemen and as members of one family.

Mrs. Archibald's long experience in the usages of society, combined with her natural tranquillity of temperament, gave her great advantages in a conversation such as that which had just passed between her nephew and herself. At the conclusion she felt she had profited by it. Firstly, she had gathered the assurance of Richard's love for Margaret; and secondly, she had found an opportunity of directing his conduct towards his cousins—

brother and sister—without seeming to interfere. All this was satisfactory to Mrs. Archibald: but she was not alone too prudent to allow her satisfaction to appear; she was also too prudent to allow Richard Archibald to descend to the library until Cornet Wynum had left.

“’Tis half-past one,” said Mr. Archibald. “The lunch-bell rang half an hour since. We had better go down.”

“Hallo, old fellow!” cried out Henry Morton, as Mr. Archibald entered the room. “I did not know you were in the house.”

“I had some business with aunt, and called on her early.”

During lunch, Richard Archibald, who ate nothing, talked a good deal, and that too about commercial business. He was unusually communicative.

“I think, Harry,” he said, after having spoken for some time, “on the whole, you will find things in better train than they were two months ago. Aunt, I make no apology for talking business before you: I think it right you and Margaret should know how our affairs are getting on; and, I know, on this point Harry thinks as I do.”

“Certainly. I know aunt can give excellent advice; and as for Meg, I think she’d be an excellent man of business if she were not a woman of talent.” And Henry Morton’s face assumed so comical a look that his aunt and sister burst into a laugh. Richard Archibald laughed too, though he spoke with modest gravity as he said,—

“Well, Harry, there are few men who have so much reason to be proud of the women of their family as we.”

“Quite right, my boy, quite right. We’re proud of the women of our family, and I hope they’re proud of us.”

“I assure you we are,” said Margaret.

“I can say the same for my part,” said Mrs. Archibald.

Richard Archibald was studying to please, and the unwonted suavity of his manner was exerting a wonderfully animating influence on the home circle. Mrs. Archibald was especially pleased, and for many reasons. Her nephew was putting her advice into operation, and in what she thought a masterly manner. She entertained great admiration for her nephew Richard, and she now contemplated with pride his self-command and mobility of manner—qualities which her husband had

always said would tend to make him an eminent pleader.

"Aunt," went on Richard, "you know Harry was wishing to get some of the money that's being put by for the estate. He wanted to put it into the business. The trustees would not consent; and we've been puzzled, because we must get capital to go into trade. We couldn't get money on the possible estate, as, after all, it may be Harry's son that would come into possession." Henry Morton laughed. "That's the way, you know, Harry, the capitalists put it, when they wanted to ask enormous per-centage for an advance. The trustees couldn't prevent Harry from raising money on his claims, and, it can't be denied, they afforded facilities, by showing papers and all that; but upon consideration, and after talking the matter over with some lawyer friends, I felt the sacrifice would be great, and I have hit upon a more economical plan. So, on the whole, 'twill be better for Harry he didn't succeed in raising the money. These capitalists look for enormous per-centage."

"'Pon my word, Dick, you're a first-rate fellow," said Henry. "I thought you had been asleep these last three months."

"My dear fellow, I don't sleep much. And

now I must take a little constitutional exercise. Will you walk across the Gardens with me to Hyde Park Corner? We can take a cab there for the City. I've made an appointment for both. I want you to have some talk with a fellow that has been recommended to me about this new loan. Aunt, you'll excuse us. Harry and I will dine at my chambers, and we'll join you here in the evening."

The effort Richard Archibald had made to control his feelings and flatter his relatives brought its own reward. He had worked himself into a most amiable humour, which made him appear as though he had no other object in life than to serve and please his friends. In this charming mood he took leave of his aunt and Margaret Morton.

The two young men walked at a brisk pace towards the Gardens. They were crossing Church Street when Mr. Morton called out,—

"There's Wynum, with his father. Let's hasten, and we'll catch 'em up."

"No," said Mr. Archibald, fiercely. "Confound the fellow! I detest him."

Seizing his cousin's arm, he turned him abruptly down Church Street, his own face dark with anger. Without speaking he strode rapidly on, till he reached High Street. Mr.

Morton was so astonished by this sudden change of manner in his cousin that, without asking a question, he allowed himself to be hurried along, and finally put into a cab at the entrance to Palace Gardens. The cab was rattling along towards Knightsbridge before Mr. Morton spoke. He then burst into a laugh. "In the name of Heaven, Dick, what's the matter, and where are you going?"

"I'll tell you when we get to my chambers."

This was all the conversation that took place until the cab reached the Temple, where Mr. Archibald had a very handsomely furnished set of chambers. Having entered the sitting-room, and thrown himself on a couch, Mr. Morton looked inquisitively at his cousin,—

"Well, Dick, well?"

But Dick made no reply. With his hat drawn over his eyes, he strode hastily, and with flushed face, up and down the room. At length he stopped suddenly before his cousin:

"Look, Harry, I've borne a great deal from that puppy, Wynum; but confound me"—he used a stronger term, which we will not record—"if I put up with it any longer!"

"What has he done?" said Harry, upon whom light began to dawn.

"Done! Why, Harry, you cannot be so

blind as not to see what he has done, and is doing, or trying to do."

"I haven't seen him do anything, or try to do anything, unbecoming a gentleman."

"No, Harry, you've seen nothing. You haven't seen his attentions to Margaret; you don't know that he makes her visits every morning of hours long, brings her flowers, and talks—"

"Stop, Dick; this won't do. My sister's name is not to be bandied about in this way by any man, no matter whether her aunt allows him to call her cousin or not. I'm my sister's natural guardian, and, by Heavens! I'm capable of taking her this very day out of aunt's house, rather than allow her name to be traded in."

"Traded in! What do you mean?"

"I mean, if you have a quarrel with Wynum, or wish to pick one with him, do it upon your own grounds, but don't bring my sister's name into it. And now, Mr. Archibald, let me tell you, if my aunt prefers the interests of her husband's nephew to those of her own nephew and niece, I must step in to protect my sister."

"Mr. Morton, you entirely misunderstand me. I respect your sister as much as you do."

“Then don’t mention her name. That’s the way to show your respect.”

Both gentlemen were standing. Mr. Archibald sat down at a table in the middle of the room. He took off his hat, which he had not removed since entering the apartment. His face was of a yellowish white, and contorted with passion. He rested his folded arms on the table, leaned forward, and forced a smile. He tried to appear calm, but his lips were white, and there was something of a galvanic effect in the effort by which he strained his features to composure. He looked at his cousin.

“I see how it is, Mr. Morton. So far from aunt preferring the interests of her husband’s nephew to those of her own niece, she has undermined my interests, she has betrayed my feelings.”

“Take care, sir, how you mention Mrs. Archibald’s name. She’s my aunt, not yours.”

“Oh, she has proved that. But I’ll appeal to Margaret herself. She’s not my cousin; but she’s more to me than a thousand cousins, more than ten thousand sisters. Oh, Harry! Harry! you’re only her brother; you can’t understand my feelings. My dear, dear Margaret!”

Overcome by the violence of his emotions,

Mr. Archibald hid his face in his hands and sobbed. Mr. Morton was confounded. He had never before seen his cousin so excited; he had not believed it possible that he could feel and, above all, show so much emotion. Of a lighter and more impressionable nature, Henry Morton felt tempted to embrace his cousin and try to soothe him, but his pride as a man forbade the concession. Truly he was touched, almost startled, by this exhibition of feeling on the part of Richard Archibald. He scarcely knew what to do. In his indecision he made a few turns through the room. Nature triumphed. He stopped short and laid his hand on his cousin's shoulder.

"Dick, don't give way so! What's the matter? I'm afraid I've been too hasty. We've both been too hasty."

Mr. Archibald lifted his head. His face was still very pale, but he had partly regained his habitual composure. Putting out his hand, which his cousin clasped,—

"Harry, without meaning to disparage you, I must say you don't understand my feelings."

"About what?"

"About Margaret."

"About my sister?"

"Look, Harry, Margaret is more to me than

a sister. When she was a little girl, she called me brother; now that she is a woman, what is she to me really? You know, Harry, my uncle taught her, and trained her as no other woman has ever been taught and trained, and why? That she should be my wife."

"Your uncle had no authority to do so. He had no right to make a present of my sister to any man."

"Harry, he judged as a father for us both; and he gave all the advantage to Margaret, so did aunt."

"I don't understand you."

"If Margaret was trained for me, remember I was trained for her; but with this difference,—I was made to feel from the time I emerged from boyhood that Margaret was to be my wife—that is, if I deserved her: I was taught to look on her as the great prize of my life. My affections became fixed on her; my hopes, my ambition, were centred in her: but her affections were allowed to rove free; she was placed on a shrine in a temple into which I was never allowed to enter. I was taught to look on her as the crown of my life, and she was taught to call me cousin. Oh! oh!"—and he laughed bitterly—"cousin, indeed! A pretty recompense for my blighted life!"

Richard Archibald was again worked up to fury by the picture he had drawn of his own wrongs. Coming close to Henry Morton, he grasped his arm and looked narrowly into his face.

“Tell me, Harry, do you call that justice? Speak out, man”—for Henry Morton looked rather scared — “speak out, man; is that justice?”

Mr. Morton freed himself from his cousin’s grasp, and tried to reply with an air of indifference,—

“I really think my sister ought to be allowed to speak for herself.”

“I say so, too. But is this making a choice—putting a red-coated whelp in her way, and—”

“Stop, stop, Dick: you mustn’t couple my sister’s name with that of any man. I’m her guardian, and I’m ready to defend her.” Mr. Morton’s face was very red and angry-looking. “Wynum is a nice fellow, and a friend of mine.”

“Oh! all right, Harry. I had my suspicions all along.” Mr. Archibald turned away with a slight sneer. Mr. Morton observed, coldly,—

“When a gentleman has suspicions, he doesn’t entertain them all along; he asks an explanation.”

“I think I know how to conduct myself as a gentleman.”

“I haven’t said anything to the contrary.”

“You’re taking up Wynum’s quarrel.”

“Against whom?”

There was no reply.

“You said you had suspicions all along: I ask, against whom?”

“Against aunt and you.”

“Indeed! May I ask of what nature were your suspicions?”

“I thought you were going to throw me over, and encourage Wynum.”

“As I said before, I think my sister ought to be allowed to judge for herself.”

“I think so too; but is she? Harry, I don’t say I’m worthy of her; but lay aside your prejudices, and tell me could a girl like Margaret ever be happy with a boy like Wynum? Could she look up to such a man? I’ve been wronged, I’ve been cruelly treated, my feelings have been trampled underfoot; but now I ask you for Margaret’s sake, for your sister’s sake, to reflect. Horribly as I have been outraged, I protest to Heaven, I feel more on Margaret’s account than on my own. I feel at the prospect I see before her of sorrow and misery. Will it not be terrible enough

for me to lose her, but I must have the additional anguish of knowing she's wretched? Oh, Margaret! Margaret!"

He covered his face with his hands, leaned his head on the table, and his whole frame shook with the violence of his emotions.

This second exhibition of weakness on the part of the reputedly strong-minded Richard Archibald quite overpowered his impressionable cousin. Henry Morton jumped up, and laying hold of Mr. Archibald's hands, removed them from before his face.

"My dear Dick, I beg your pardon,—I do indeed. I had no idea you cared so much for Margaret. I didn't think you could care so much for any one."

Henry Morton held his cousin's hands in one of his, and his disengaged arm lay affectionately across his shoulders. Richard Archibald looked up, his face strongly marked by traces of the agitation he had experienced.

"Harry," he said, "you don't understand me; nobody does but Margaret. She could understand me. You didn't know—you say you didn't know—how much I cared for her. By Heavens, Harry!"—and he sprang to his feet—"the volcanic fires pent up within the bosom of the earth, on the eve of their fiercest out-

break, are cold compared to what I feel for Margaret. Oh, Harry, I say again a brother can't understand my feelings. When I look at Margaret and know there's nobody like her, when I remember I've been brought up to love her, to worship her—oh, Harry, I've been basely used."

"My dear Dick, not by me, and certainly not by aunt. And that reminds me, by Jove, we've both acted badly towards aunt. You said you had suspicions of her; and I said I'd take Meg out of her house. That was confoundedly ungrateful. She's been a good aunt to us, and a real mother to Margaret. I'll tell her what I've said; 'tis the only compensation I can make her."

"Better not. She'd only laugh at you."

"Even so, 'twould relieve my mind to tell her. Dick, I'd like a glass of sherry, and, I think, so would you. You look pale."

"There's sherry in that chiffonnier. I'll take brandy-and-water. I've had a terrible night and morning."

Each partook of the refreshment he chose.

"Now, Harry," said his cousin, "'tis five o'clock. I shall order dinner for half-past six. That will give you time to run into the City to see Waite and Taite. I made an appointment with the fellows for you and me to meet that

fellow Grimey at three o'clock ; but the time's past. We can't do it to-day. I've something here that will occupy me till you return."

" All right, old fellow ; I'm off."

Harry Morton put out his hand. His cousin pressed it affectionately.

Left alone, Richard Archibald pulled off his coat and boots, and flung himself on a couch. A man of strong passions, and trained to self-control, the outburst of the morning had shaken him terribly. His had been a militant existence from childhood upwards. The forces arrayed against him were society in general ; the forces at his command were the powers and faculties of his own mind. He knew—had always known—he must fight hand to hand to attain the objects of his ambition ; and he knew that to conquer he must always have his own forces in readiness. Richard Archibald was accustomed to self-examination. With him it was a philosophic habit for which he had to thank his deceased uncle. He found it beneficial, as the general of an army finds it useful to review his troops. Richard Archibald knew, in a worldly sense, the importance of keeping cool ; he piqued himself on his self-command, and was proud of the reputation it had acquired him amongst his seniors. He was a man of

strong intellect and stern will, who not unfrequently, in his self-communings, rejoiced he had no feeling, and sneered at his impulsive neighbours, who fling aside to-day what they gloated over yesterday. But then Richard Archibald said he put principle in the place of feeling, and that it was so best. And so it would be were it not that all his principles radiated from one point, and returned to the same—self.

Now, stretched on his couch, Mr. Archibald was astonished as he reflected on the violence of passion that had shaken him so often during the past twenty hours, and which had left him unfit for business or study. Then, too, he thought of Margaret Morton. He thought of her as his own pre-elected wife, and his blood again boiled furiously, until the veins swelled in his forehead, as he considered the presumption of the man who could dare step within the sacred circle of his rights. Richard Archibald had long been accustomed to compass his ends after his own fashion, and, having laid down his plans, to carry them out coolly and persistently. He was not an impulsive man; he pre-considered and then acted on a forecast plan. And now in attempting to project a scheme of action he saw he would

have to contend with his aunt and Henry Morton. It was true they were his auxiliaries, but auxiliaries that would act after their own fashion, irrespective of his wishes. They acted as a defence to Margaret Morton in a way that precluded the possibility of his being able to make her a party in his favour. He saw he would not alone have to fight his enemy, but also to cajole his auxiliaries and flatter the garrison that he hoped to make surrender. An hour's meditation brought Richard Archibald to this view of the case.

"By Jove," he said, "I've always had to fight single-handed, and must do so now. But Meg is worth fighting for. Confound that whelp!"

It was nearly seven o'clock when Henry Morton returned to the Temple. Richard Archibald was quite himself, and brisk under the influence of profuse ablutions and a fresh toilette. Henry Morton was glad of his cousin's changed manner. It was quite a relief. He felt, though he would not care to acknowledge, the strong mental organization of Richard, and would rather not witness another ebullition of passion on his part. The dinner was excellent, and received ample justice from the two gentlemen, on whose appetite the

excitement of the morning had not, apparently, acted injuriously. When the dinner meats had given place to cigars and wine, Henry Morton gave an account of his city mission. He had seen Mr. Grimey, and had made an appointment for the following afternoon. Then Richard Archibald laid before his cousin the plan he had laid for raising money without interfering with the estate fund. As to the mode of applying the money, he would defer to Mr. Morton, whose practical knowledge of commercial matters rendered him the proper judge in the case. All this was said in a most amiable tone, and Henry Morton, whilst he admired his cousin's sagacity, admitted mentally that when he chose no man could be more agreeable than Richard Archibald.

It was eight o'clock. The commercial confidences between the cousins had come to a close; a cab was called, which carried off the gentlemen towards Kensington. During a silent ride, each reflected on the occurrences of the morning, and each felt more deeply than before that, though the views of both with regard to Margaret Morton may tend to the same end, the line of conduct to be pursued by each should be very different. Mr. Morton's plan was very simple. He resolved to tell his

aunt everything. Mr. Archibald determined to bend all concerned in the affair to his own will.

The arrival of the gentlemen at Eva Terrace was unusually late. The explanation offered was the mystifying one of business—an excuse which ladies are supposed never to understand, but with which they are always expected to be satisfied. The new arrivals were in the highest good humour. Richard Archibald delighted his aunt. He was studiously polite to the company in general; perhaps a shade too ceremoniously so. With Miss Morton his manner was different: it was that of a man who, whilst he asserts a claim, pleads for its recognition. He knew how to engross her attention, and show the rest of the company he had a right to do so.

“Here, Margaret,” he said, at leave-taking, “is some of your work in another form”; and he drew from his pocket a bundle of proofs. “I haven’t corrected ’em: you’ll do it better. The style is yours.”

Margaret blushed deeply. The press was the goal of her ambition, and to be made an associate in literary work was gliding her gently towards the groove in which she would wish her future career to run. She held the

proofs in her hand with a look of conscious pleasure.

“You’ll be able to read ’em to-morrow morning, I hope. You can return ’em to me in the evening. Printers are always in a hurry.”

CHAPTER XII.

MRS. ARCHIBALD'S drawing-room, once so tranquil in its evening routine of whist and quiet talk, was now transformed into an arena where strong passions and bitter and offended feelings were doing battle, sometimes in general action, sometimes in light skirmishes, and at other times in single combats of desperate animosity.

Strangely enough, the most terrible encounters took place, not between the gentlemen whose interests were supposed to be directly at stake, but between their friends and partisans; for before the expiration of a week, dating from the morning when Mr. Archibald made his early unexpected call at Eva Terrace, the habitual frequenters of Mrs. Archibald's house were divided during the first two days into two parties, which eventually split into divers strong factions, whose animus was great in proportion to their numerical

smallness. But these fractional portions were ready to re-form in their original integrity upon certain great occasions, when it was supposed a general principle was imperilled. The leaders, or rather heroes, of the contest were Mr. Archibald and Cornet Wynum; and the prize for which they quietly contended was Miss Morton's favour. The competition was, however, carried on so secretly that only the initiated could perceive its play. As long as Cornet Wynum enjoyed the supreme bliss derivable from his protracted morning visits at Eva Terrace, he was satisfied to see Mr. Archibald assert his cousinly privileges during the evening, though these were so slightly profited by, that, whilst the senior party enjoyed their whist, Cornet Wynum sat in conversation with Miss Morton and her brother, the trio sometimes converted into a quartette by the presence of Mr. Archibald; but still *she* was always there. And when Mrs. Archibald's apprehensive prudence induced her to increase the number of her habitual evening visitors, in the hope of diluting the draught she was obliged to swallow, very little difference was made in the position of Cornet Wynum. He talked with Miss Keel and Monsieur Claude, and, using them as a combining medium, con-

trived to amalgamate his group with Miss Morton's. This required only the exercise of a little quiet gentlemanly tact, and Cornet Wynum, though young, was no fool; and Mr. Morton unobtrusively assisted his little manœuvres, partly because he liked the young cornet, and partly because he took pleasure in exhibiting to his aunt Richard Archibald's utter indifference to her niece. Even when Mrs. Archibald's fears first induced her to take action, the worst consequence thereof, as far as regarded Cornet Wynum, was that he was elevated to the onerous honour of sitting beside the lady of the house during the evening; but then he had the satisfaction of seeing that no enemy occupied the post from which he had been cunningly withdrawn.

So far the position of Cornet Wynum was not much discomfited; but when Mr. Archibald's suspicions and passions were roused, affairs began to look very dark for the poor cornet. Mr. Archibald did not treat him as a rival; he was more blandly polite, but less familiar than before; and he made him feel that Miss Morton's intellectual caste placed her so vastly above him that it was useless to strain his eyes staring upwards in that direction.

This sinking by Mr. Archibald of Cornet

Wynum was effected very skilfully, the wily operator actually contriving to enlist the victim's father against him, Mr. Wynum being all the while unconscious of the cat's-paw position into which he was lured. Mr. Archibald did it in this way. He would request Mr. Wynum's opinion on some point of discussion that had arisen between him and Miss Morton in reference to the manuscript. Mr. Wynum would listen to all the arguments, *pro* and *con*, which Mr. Archibald stated with his habitual lucidity, putting Miss Morton's views in the most favourable light. Mr. Wynum, like certain great critics, often summarily dismissed the arguments brought before his notice, and treated the auditory to his own views on the question, politely appealing, from time to time, to the persons most interested, especially to Miss Morton, whom Mr. Archibald always kept in the foreground.

On two occasions during this first week of hostilities, Monsieur Charleroi was present, and was sucked into the eddy of the discussion; his son, too, was brought within the influence of the vortex by the skill of Mr. Archibald, who frequently made Latin quotations *à propos* of some point just mooted, and asked Monsieur Claude for a translation, which was promptly

given in English or in French. Sometimes these Latin quotations were submitted to Miss Morton, who, thanks to her uncle's training, possessed great facility in translation. All this was effected with the greatest simplicity and apparent absence of design by Mr. Archibald, who seemingly only sought to correct or strengthen his own opinion, whilst in reality he showed all gentlemen present, as well as Cornet Wynum, that he, and only he, was the equal of Miss Morton. He secured a double advantage by this move, because he not only intimidated any who might be likely to become his rivals, but he raised himself in the opinion of those present who cared to estimate a man by his intellectual gifts.

Miss Maunsell was not of the number; Cornet Wynum was. Miss Maunsell thought the learned tone of the conversation maintained by Mr. Archibald's group quite an offence to the rest of the company, especially when a young lady was made to figure therein; whilst Cornet Wynum, on the other hand, saw in imagination Miss Morton rising to the very zenith of intellectual greatness, and felt himself descending rapidly to the nadir of nothingness.

There were two people made uncomfortable

by Mr. Archibald's new line of policy. Madame Charleroi, who on two evenings of that week was at Eva Terrace, could not help thinking that English young ladies were allowed extraordinary licence in society, and, though she was much pleased at the prominent part her husband and son took, she still felt that the inevitable tendency of such conversations was to exclusiveness. So Madame Charleroi dropped out of a circle in which she could not shine, and drew nearer to Miss Maunsell. Mrs. Archibald did all she could to entertain both ladies, but they plainly felt they were placed in a second-rate position; and Henry Morton, who did not care for extempore essays on abstract subjects, lounged about the room, sometimes staring at the prints on the table, sometimes staring at his own image in the glass, and sometimes trying to do the agreeable for his aunt and her group. As for Cornet Wynum, he took up a position which, in a strategic point of view, was excellent; it was one from which, without being observed, he became aware of what was going on in the enemy's camp, and, so posted, he fed his eyes and ears at the cost of his heart.

So vigilant was Mr. Archibald, and so plainly did he let every one know his wishes, and so

cleverly did he make every one bend to his will, that within ten days after he had first taken action Cornet Wynum made no more morning calls at Eva Terrace. He contented himself with leaving a bouquet every morning for Mrs. Archibald. How he longed to leave one for Miss Morton ! but as he had never done so, thinking the omission a clever stroke of policy, he dared not begin then. Everything went smoothly in the evening at Eva Terrace. Mr. Wynum was delighted with the literary, not to say bookish, tone the conversation had lately taken. Miss Morton and Mr. Archibald rose greatly in his estimation, as was natural, considering they gave him an opportunity of descanting on subjects in which he was well made up.

It was noon. Cornet Wynum was sitting with his father ; each had lighted a cigar, and was apparently enjoying the flavour of the weed. Whilst engaged in the grave duty of smoking, the gentlemen did not suspend conversation. Mr. Wynum had referred to something said on the previous evening at Eva Terrace, and, passing from one point to another, had finished by giving utterance to his admiration for Miss Morton, for the mode in which she had been educated and the

extent of her general reading. His son listened in silence.

"She is a highly educated girl," said Mr. Wynum, slowly whiffing his cigar, "some persons"—he spoke in a dreamy, speculative tone—"might be apt to call her attainments masculine; but she is in appearance and manner perfectly feminine. Don't you think so, Charlie?"

"Yes, father."

"Ah, you don't care about intellectual women. So much the better, perhaps. I always did. When I was a young man—but older than you are, Charlie—I cultivated the acquaintance of intellectual women. Little Mrs. Stanhope, what a fascinating creature she was! Her natural talent was extraordinary, and she had read a great deal. Her mind was not trained like Miss Morton's, but she had greater knowledge of the world, and was more accustomed to society; and then her wit and vivacity—she was a wonderful little creature."

"Was she very handsome?"

"Not at all handsome. Very small, but a pretty little figure and intelligent dark eyes. She *was* a clever little creature. But what silly things these clever women do! She married a half-caste Indian."

“Why did she do that?”

“We-el-l-l-l. He was very rich, and she had no money. Ha, ha, ha! Poor Stanhope! She treated him like a dog,—at least like a servant, ha, ha, ha! He generally sat on the box of the carriage with the coachman. Ha, ha, ha! Poor Stanhope! He was very proud of his wife. I often think, too, of old Mrs. Stubman. She was a woman of powerful intellect and well read, too well read, indeed, in the philosophy of the French school. She was decidedly a woman of masculine understanding. I generally visited her of a morning. She was an early riser and a great politician. Her son was a distinguished preacher. ’Tis pleasant, Charlie, to look back on old times.”

Charlie groaned. “Oh, father, you were very talented and very well educated. Of course, clever women liked you.”

“Charlie, ’tis well to give you advice on those points. A man should always cultivate the acquaintance of well-bred women. The higher you can go the better. And by height I refer more to the qualities of the individual woman than to her social grade. A man’s moral tone is determined by that of his female acquaintance, and ultimately his social position is fixed by it; so is that of his children.”

“I shall never have children.”

“Pooh, pooh! You’ll marry, my dear boy, and have children. I shall be very glad to see you married, Charlie. A man is more respectable by being married.”

“I shall never marry.”

“Pooh, pooh! Your time will come, my dear boy, your time will come. Every man’s time comes.”

“He may not be able to profit by it.”

“If he have his eyes open he can. In the management of these matters, Charlie, as in most other things, there is a certain science, resulting perhaps from knowledge of the world, arising perchance from natural clearness of perception, or perchance from a combination of both. There was Major Smallpace, a very nice fellow. He was for years attached to a lady, visited her constantly, paid her every attention, and never had the courage to ask her to marry, though all the time she was only waiting to be asked.”

“But he couldn’t be sure of that. He might have been refused.”

“My dear boy, a man must be very dull that doesn’t see his way in such cases. I believe that in matrimonial speculations steadiness of purpose does a great deal. There’s

my charming friend, Princess Vermicelli. I knew her in her youth, just before she married. She was then—let me see—well, I shall say eight-and-twenty. She was a beautiful woman, ever queen of the ball-room. I danced with her every night during her last unmarried season. She was in no hurry to marry. She was ambitious; she was determined to have rank. She had plenty of money; not a colossal fortune, but sufficient to make a handsome turn-out. She didn't succeed in England, so whilst her beauty was still in full bloom she tried the Continent. At one of the German watering-places she met Prince Vermicelli, and spite of the efforts of his family, spite of the most powerful opposition on their part, she married him. I've always thought, myself, she was mainly indebted to Mrs. Page's good management for the match."

"Who was Mrs. Page?"

"She was the wife of an Indian officer. Her health was too delicate to allow her to accompany her husband on foreign service; and as the allowance he was able to make her was small, she eked it out by acting as chaperon to Miss Dobbwell before she became Princess Vermicelli."

"What kind of man was the Prince?"

“A nice little fellow—a very nice little fellow, some four or five years younger than his wife. I frequently met him at the German Spas. We played *rouge et noir* at the same table at Baden-Baden. The Prince always staked gold.”

There was a long silence, during which father and son worked their cigars so effectually that each became partially invisible to the other. Mr. Wynum was evidently indulging in the dreamy reminiscences that he loved. His son's reflections seemed to be of a more profound and not so pleasing character.

“Charlie,” said Mr. Wynum, taking his cigar from his lips, and leisurely knocking into the tidy the long tip of whitish ash, the fruit of his ardent smoking, “Charlie, as I have already said, always cultivate the society of well-bred women. ’Tis they who give a man a stamp in society.”

“Yes, father.”

The cornet had withdrawn his cigar from his lips, had shaken the ash into the tidy, and then thoughtfully laid his cigar in the little tray.

“Father,” he said, “if you admired all these ladies so much, how did you like to see them married to other men?”

“My dear boy, ’twas nothing to me. I’d much rather see ’em married to other men than to myself”; and Mr. Wynum smiled. “But seriously, my dear Charlie, a man learns to associate with the most attractive women without thinking of marriage. ’Tis one of the most useful lessons that an early introduction into society gives. Beautiful women receive admiration as a right. ’Tis a tax they levy, and which is cheerfully paid. It takes nothing off our income: that’s a tax for which we receive full value.”

“But when a beautiful woman you have admired marries, you feel you’re cut out.”

“Nothing of the kind. A beautiful woman don’t always marry the most attractive man in her circle. She’ll marry whoever she can get, if she hasn’t money.”

“That’s horrible.”

“Not at all. I don’t mean to say that a woman sacrifices her feelings, or compromises her principles, by so doing. When a beautiful woman who wishes to marry reckons up her acquaintance, and finds that the most attractive men amongst ’em are non-marriers, the others—the marrying men—assume a certain monetary value in her eyes, and she directs her attention towards ’em. She chooses one,

or she's chosen by him, and they make a match."

"But a man cannot always choose."

"No, nor a woman either. I speak of women who see their way, or who are under the strict guidance of parents that see their way. Women are sometimes very badly treated by men, who tamper with their affections, hold 'em on for years, and suddenly marry another. Such a rascal deserves to be shot. I'd think nothing of putting a bullet through such a fellow."

"He'd deserve it."

"That he would. I had a crack of a pistol once at a rascal that insulted a friend of your mother's. I nearly winged the fellow."

"Duelling is out of fashion."

"Yes, and pity 'tis. Men were more civil and more careful in their behaviour when 'twas in fashion."

Here Mr. Wynum resumed his cigar. After some long and tranquillizing whiffs, he said, speaking slowly and rather dreamily,—

"Ah, Charlie, I could tell you much that would help you in going through life."

"I know that, father."

"Nothing like experience, my dear boy; but 'tis like a legacy that comes too late to be

used; only with this difference—we can bequeath the legacy to our children, we can't transfuse the experience."

Another pause of about five minutes, during which the elderly gentleman puffed his cigar languidly, and the young one sat with his elbow resting on the table, his head leaning on his hand, and his eyes fixed on the carpet, as if he were counting the number of threads in the Brussels octagon at which he stared.

"Father," said the young man, without lifting his eyes, "do you think Miss Morton will marry her cousin?"

"Perhaps, yes; perhaps, no. I've remarked that generally these long engagements come to nothing."

"Are they engaged?" said the cornet, with a quickness that gave the question the character of an exclamation.

"No. Mrs. Archibald knows the world too well, and is too prudent, to engage her niece where there's no immediate prospect of marriage. And I must do Mrs. Archibald the justice to say she has brought up her niece in feminine delicacy and purity of mind not common at the present day."

"But Miss Morton will be married to Mr. Archibald?"

"'Tis hard to say. There's no engagement. There's a kind of family compact, implied, not ratified. I don't think much of such family compacts: they fetter the opinion of the circle in which the young people move, but they lay no obligation on the person most concerned. I've never seen any good come of 'em. Mr. Archibald is free; Miss Morton is free. The outside public think they're engaged. They may never be married."

"If I thought that," said the cornet, in a tone of determination and with an energy of manner that made his father look up with a wide-awake expression quite unusual with him.

"Well, Charlie, what then?"

Charlie looked a little cowed, but the next moment he stood up and, advancing to the fireplace, faced his father.

"Well, father, I'll tell you what it is; I don't like to be snubbed."

"Who snubs you?"

"Archibald."

"Archibald? I thought you and he were excellent friends."

"So we were, until about a fortnight ago, when he and Morton changed."

"Tell me all about it."

And Mr. Wynum put down his cigar, and

listened with great attention whilst his son spoke.

“Well, father, ever since I came to know Mrs. Archibald, I’ve left a bouquet for her every morning.” Here the inexperienced cornet blushed “like any rose.”

“Quite right, my boy, quite right. Go on,” said his father.

“When I called with the bouquet, I was shown into the library, where Miss Morton and her brother always are of a morning. In the hot weather we went into the garden. I read to Miss Morton in the arbour, generally French. She did some needlework or drawing. I stayed there until I came on to you, and Mrs. Archibald was always glad to see me in the evening. All was right till about a fortnight ago, and since then Archibald snubs me. I can’t stand it. He’s always at Mrs. Archibald’s now of a morning, and Mrs. Archibald herself, that used n’t to get up till eleven, is now up with the sun and down in the library at ten. Morton, too, is turned against me. In the beginning—that is, before the last fortnight—he stood a friend, and often gave Archibald a cut for my sake, but now he’s dead against me. Every one in the house is against me. Even Clifton, the servant, gives me a look like

thunder when I call now. I'll never put my foot there again: I can't stand it!"

Mr. Wynum rose rather hastily from his chair, laid his cigar on the mantel-shelf, and stepping up to his son, put both his hands on the cornet's shoulders, looked straight in his face, shook him gently, and burst into a laugh. There was in that laugh, and still more in the light that beamed in Mr. Wynum's eyes, an approach to humour that his son had never before seen him exhibit.

"My dear Charlie," and he looked full in the young man's face and gave him another friendly shake,—“instead of being angry, you ought to feel flattered by the thunder-storm you have raised.”

“I'm not flattered, father. I'm—”

The young man stopped short. He had been brought up by his mother with so exalted a notion of his father's superiority, that he looked upon himself as a mere nothing before him. His father's laugh cut him to the quick: he thought it one of derision. He was profoundly pained, and regretted having opened his mind as freely as he had done. But his father laughed again, and the son, who had been trained in feelings of more than filial reverence, felt now something like pleasure in being able,

even at so great cost, to afford his father a hearty laugh.

“Ah, father, you laugh at me.”

“Yes, Charlie. I laugh at you because you don’t know the world; because you don’t know your own value. Why, Charlie, my lad, you can beat Archibald to tatters.”

Charlie looked up, and the colour rushed to his face.

“I don’t think so, father.”

“Trust me, my boy. I know the world. I’ve given many a man advice in such matters. ’Twould be strange if I couldn’t advise my own son. But you’ve some complaint against Archibald and Morton. Have they behaved in an ungentlemanly manner?”

“Oh, no, no.”

“If they have you know my opinion on such matters, Charlie. You know what you, as a soldier and a gentleman, ought to do.”

“Oh! there’s nothing of the kind. I wish there were. On the contrary, Archibald is killingly civil; but he makes me feel so little.”

“I don’t see that.”

“Ah! father, but I feel it. He has taken up this new dodge of talking to you about systems of philosophy, and the university curriculum and international law, and other

infernal things. And then you both appeal to Miss Morton, and the conversation is between the three of you. Morton's thrown out, but he don't care. I don't think Mrs. Archibald would like it; only she's all for Archibald now."

"By Jove, Charlie, you don't put us in a very nice light. 'Twould seem by your account that we haven't behaved very civilly to the rest of the company."

The cornet laughed.

"I didn't mean that, father. 'Tis all against me. Archibald shows Miss Morton what a poor fellow I am—so uneducated: he makes her despise me."

"By no means, my boy. You're quite mistaken. No one could despise you. I know the world. I know men, and I know women; and I'm proud of you, Charlie, and I can read what women think. You'd beat Archibald and Morton hollow, my boy, any day. You're a much finer fellow than either of 'em. I repeat, Charlie, I'm proud of you, and you know I'm not easily pleased. I *am* proud of you, Charlie."

"Oh, father, father, how happy mother would be to hear you say so!"

And the son's eyes were filled with tears,

and the colour on his cheeks was dappled, because of his emotion.

Poor Charlie had his mother's heart.

Mr. Wynum's eyes, too, were full of tears. He was pleased to see in others, and to feel himself, a graceful emotion. He now resumed his seat, took up his cigar, shook off the ashes, and, by the action of his breath, humoured into a kindly ray the half-extinguished spark. Having performed each of these actions deliberately and with thoughtful precision, he proceeded to enjoy the fruits of his labour in inhaling the nicotine breath of the pleasant weed; and whilst so employed his glance was steadily directed forward and downward, as though the geometrical figure traced on the carpet at his son's feet presented a problem he was trying to solve. At length, as if fully satisfied with the result of his meditation, he lifted his head, took the cigar from his lips, and said to his son,—

“Charlie, sit down; draw your chair near, and let us talk this matter quietly over.”

Cornet Wynum drew his chair nearer to his father, frankly answered all the questions put to him, and listened attentively to the opinions and counsels tendered.

A satisfactory arrangement having been

come to on every debated point, the father and son went forth to take their daily promenade. On the evening of that day Mr. Wynum appeared at Eva Terrace unaccompanied by his son. He was bearer to Mrs. Archibald of an apology from Cornet Wynum, who was unable to pay his respects in person. The time for the embarkation of his regiment was drawing near, and his military duties would now take up his entire attention. His stay in London had been prolonged beyond the customary limits by the indulgence of his colonel, who was an old friend of his father's.

Mrs. Archibald expressed her polite regret at Cornet Wynum's absence on that evening, and still more at the prospect of losing his society altogether; but whilst Mrs. Archibald uttered these conventional regrets, her heart expanded with a sense of relief. The efforts she was making would soon cease, and she would be allowed to relapse into her customary calm.

Miss Maunsell's sympathy was immediately excited, and found vent in a profusion of words and sighs. How would Mr. Wynum ever accustom himself to the loss of that splendid creature, that noble young man, his child, that he had not seen for years, and now

saw only to be dragged from him, banished into a savage country, to be torn in pieces by tigers, or stung to death by cobras, or trampled under foot by elephants, or, at best, to die, lonely and deserted, in a bungalow, parched with fever, or else to be shot on the battle-field, and afterwards devoured by the birds of the air or thrown into the Ganges?

And Miss Maunsell went on putting into every possible form the dangers to which the young soldier was about to be exposed, and to one or other of which he must inevitably succumb. Miss Maunsell would admit no alternative. And she was able to heighten the dismalness of the darkly-shaded panorama by illustrations drawn from the actual experiences and fate of many of her Indian friends. It was a fearful picture of Indian life, or rather of death in India; for, according to Miss Maunsell's relation, life was so short in these regions as scarcely to deserve being taken into account. To adopt the pathetic lady's theory in faith, one should believe that tigers were posted night and day at the entrance of every thicket and at every turn in every road; that a company of cobras was perpetually standing erect around every courtyard and every garden, ready to dart their envenomed stings into the

unwary European's face; that an army of elephants, with wily sagacity, was drawn up in the background, with trunks uplifted to fell him to the earth, where they could afterwards trample him to death at their leisure, the sky meanwhile darkened with birds of prey that smelled from afar the carrion that was to be.

Mrs. Archibald listened nervously to Miss Maunsell's long tirade, which she dared not interrupt, but the course of which she would fain have altered. As to Mr. Wynum, he exhibited much courage in combating the gloomy auguries of the lady-speaker. He believed tigers to afford the best sport in the world to hunters. Englishmen were fond of the field; but what was fox-hunting compared to tiger-hunting? As to elephants, mounted on one a man felt an emperor, and might trample on cobras and defy fever.

"Then, Miss Maunsell," he went on to say, "let us look at the bright side of the medal. A man goes to India a cornet, and returns a colonel or major-general."

"Yes, sir, with a congested liver and a jaundiced face."

"Miss Maunsell," said Henry Morton, coming forward, "I hope you don't allude to

me. I've returned from India, and I hope my complexion will still pass muster."

There was a general laugh, for Mr. Morton's complexion was delicately fair.

The evening passed away pleasantly. Mrs. Archibald, relieved from the strain of severe duty, experienced a reaction, and lay languidly back on her couch, taking only occasional part in the conversation. This kind of tranquillity was to her enjoyment. Richard Archibald was happy, declaiming to a group composed of Miss Morton, Miss Keel, and Monsieur Claude, the latter being the only member of his family present that evening. All who received a general invitation to Eva Terrace were free to come when they pleased of an evening. Mrs. Archibald held a perpetual "at home," for which no special invitations were issued. Hitherto, dating from the commencement of her widowhood, Mrs. Archibald's circle had been limited to the immediate members of her own family and her three old friends; lately, when she found herself in a little social difficulty, she had attempted to assimilate a foreign element with her home circle. But the attempt was not a success. Madame Charleroi did not feel at her ease, going to the house of a lady who never accepted a return.

It was true Mrs. Archibald pleaded the excuse of delicate health; but Madame Charleroi was not strong, and thought she had as much claim to indulgence as anybody. And overlying all these feelings was an uneasy consciousness, or, at least, a disquieting suspicion, that Mrs. Archibald regarded herself as superior to the trader's wife. Not by word, or tone, or look had Mrs. Archibald given justifiable grounds for such suspicion; but it existed in Madame Charleroi's mind, not as an individual thought, but as an unpleasant accessory that infused, if not direct discomfort, at least a disposition to that state. Madame Charleroi was always received by Mrs. Archibald with a certain amount of kindness—an implied thanks for visiting a valetudinarian. Miss Maunsell dwelt largely, when in private with Madame Charleroi, on the immense benefit her acquaintance conferred on "that dear creature" by reviving her taste for society, and Miss Maunsell hoped much from what had already been done. The French lady listened to all this with the best possible grace, but an indefinable feminine instinct made her feel she was being made to serve a purpose by Mrs. Archibald. Under these impressions Madame Charleroi soon restricted her acquaintance at Eva Terrace to a

strict exchange of morning visits, but she was well pleased that her son should go there on the familiar terms the lady of the house had laid down. The tone of the society was excellent, and Mrs. Archibald's nephews were respectable acquaintances for Monsieur Claude.

On the evening that Mr. Wynum apologized to Mrs. Archibald for the absence of his son, the time passed, as we have said, quietly and agreeably, according to the tastes of the assembled personages. About ten o'clock Mr. Wynum rose to leave. He paused for a moment before Mrs. Archibald.

"I am going to ask your indulgence," he said, "and that of Miss Maunsell, for what, I'm afraid, you will call an act of selfishness on my part."

"Impossible, my dear sir, impossible. You couldn't be selfish."

"Miss Maunsell, I fear I'm about to forfeit your good opinion on that point." Mr. Wynum spoke with a graceful smile, and, turning to Mrs. Archibald, continued. "I've engaged your two nephews and Monsieur Claude to dine with me next Thursday at Richmond. My son and a couple of his military friends will be with us. I'm anxious to enjoy as much of his company as I can before he goes."

“No wonder, my dear sir,” broke in Miss Maunsell—“that beautiful young man, that you may never see again.”

“Oh, Miss Maunsell,” said Margaret Morton, who formed one of a standing group round the speakers, “you’re one of Job’s comforters.”

“A very impertinent remark,” retorted Miss Maunsell, her face furiously red, and her large eyes flashing anger. “I believe I have feeling; there are some people who have none.”

“I didn’t mean—” said Margaret.

Mr. Wynum, contradicting the habits of his life, interrupted a lady; indeed, he seemed to overlook Miss Morton altogether, whilst with his blandest smile he bowed to Miss Maunsell, saying,—

“Nobody who has the pleasure of knowing Miss Maunsell can doubt her possessing most kindly and generous feeling.”

“You’re very good, sir; very good.” And, so saying, Miss Maunsell cast down her eyes—her strongest expression of indignant feeling—and what with the deep-set orbs, so closely veiled, and the aquiline nose, and the flushed face, she looked like the bust of a Roman matron cut in red sandstone.

Mrs. Archibald, without taking any notice of

the quarrel, looked up at Mr. Wynum as if awakening from a short meditation.

"May we expect the pleasure of seeing Cornet Wynum to-morrow evening?"

"I fear not. Some of his brother-officers have just returned to town, men whose leave of absence is nearly expired. 'Tis well they should know something of each other before starting on a long voyage."

"I almost dread," said Mrs. Archibald, with a look of mock sentimentality, "to ask the next question. May we expect to see Mr. Wynum here to-morrow evening?"

"I believe not. I've promised to dine with my son and some of his military friends."

"Ellen," said Mrs. Archibald, turning to Miss Maunsell, "pray sit down. I beg you all to sit down."

The company obeyed, and their looks showed a return of cheerfulness.

"And now, Mr. Wynum," resumed the lady of the house, "I've to thank you for the kind manner in which you have prepared us all for the shock of not seeing you for the next two days."

Mr. Wynum bowed low, with his hand on his heart. The rest of the company looked delighted. Henry Morton, obedient to a signal

from his aunt, had touched the bell, and given some directions to the servant. Clifton appeared with a tray, decanter, and glasses.

“Really,” said the lady of the house, “I feel to want a glass of wine”—this with a sweet smile—“Henry, Richard, pray do the honours.”

The young men did their aunt’s bidding, and high good humour soon prevailed. It was a quarter past eleven when a second attempt was made at breaking up. Miss Maunsell, having been assisted to put on her shawl by Miss Morton, for which service the young lady received a friendly “Thank you, dear,” took her departure with Monsieur Claude and Miss Keel. Mr. Archibald and Mr. Morton insisted on accompanying Mr. Wynum to his lodgings.

Whilst making the customary *détour*, on the way to St. John’s Terrace, Mr. Archibald said,

“What a fiery temper old Maunsell is! And how rude she was to Margaret!”

“Ye-es,” said Mr. Wynum, in a mild drawl, and as if trying to recall the circumstance, “she is rather inflammable, but a good-natured woman. Poor old Maunsell!”

“I’ve often heard her very rude to Margaret,” continued Mr. Archibald. “I’m sure she dislikes her.”

“No, no,” said Mr. Wynum; “’tis her way. Miss Morton knows very well how to deal with her.”

“Still, I’ve often heard her very rude to my cousin; and, should it occur again in my presence, I’ll give my opinion. What do you think, Harry?”

“Well, Dick, you see Miss Maunsell is an old friend of aunt’s; she’s been faithful to her in her troubles. ’Twouldn’t do to say anything sharp to her. She looks upon Margaret still as a child, and lectures her. Meg and I don’t mind her.”

“She’s never rude to you, Archibald,” said Mr. Wynum. “Morton takes the right view. Miss Maunsell is not only an old woman, but an old maid. I’ve remarked through life that such women live in an atmosphere of delusions, one of which is that they never recognize the advance into womanhood of girls they saw children a few years before, whilst, on the contrary, they have an acute perception of the growing manhood of the rising generation, and are quite willing to put themselves on a par with young men of five-and-twenty. I’ve no doubt Miss Maunsell would receive the addresses of either of you with a favourable ear.”

“She shan’t be troubled with mine,” said Mr. Archibald, in a dry and rather angry tone.

“As I’m disengaged,” said Mr. Morton, laughing, “I can take time to consider.”

“That’s wisely said, Morton. You’re both young enough to wait.”

And Mr. Wynum laughed. So did Mr. Morton, but not so did Mr. Archibald. He was evidently angry with Miss Maunsell.

The three gentlemen separated at St. John’s Terrace with a renewed reminder and fresh promises regarding the appointed meeting on Thursday.

CHAPTER XIII.

TEN days had passed and Cornet Wynum had not presented himself at Eva Terrace. The customary bouquet was now left every morning for Mrs. Archibald and Miss Maunsell by a servant. Cornet Wynum no longer called with filial punctuality on his father in the early afternoon; the father went to his son's hotel, and appeared no more of an evening at Mrs. Archibald's. That lady's evening assemblies might be said to be under martial law; the call to arms echoed in the ears of all that affectionate circle, and indeed Cornet Wynum was regarded by Miss Maunsell as having been repeatedly shot dead.

Mr. Wynum's Richmond party had gone off delightfully. Henry Morton, who felt as if a yoke had been removed from his neck, had taken the same company the following week to the same Star and Garter, where they were

affectionately received and nobly entertained by—the waiters, to whom Mr. Morton in the evening presented his grateful acknowledgments under the guise of a certain number of gold pieces. Richard Archibald, relieved from the labours of watchful rivalry, began to feel a return of his ancient stolid peace. He would have done as Henry Morton did, and taken the gentlemen on an excursion; but it occurred to him that, in the face of late events, it became him to honour the ladies, and hinted to his aunt his wish to make up a rural party that should include herself, Margaret, and Miss Maunsell. Mrs. Archibald protested against the design as far as she was concerned, assuring her nephew she was wholly unequal to such an exertion. She, however, much approved of his inviting the gentlemen of the circle, for she secretly dreaded that Mr. Wynum might take offence; but Mr. Archibald, contradicted in his own proposition, said he would take time to reflect on the other.

Ten days had passed tranquilly. Mrs. Archibald had gradually relapsed into the languid repose to which she was constitutionally addicted, and the love of which habit had strengthened. She did not regret the absence of Mr. Wynum and his son from her evening

assemblies, nor was she sorry that, during the latter part of the week, her nephews, too, had remained away. She had been subjected to a great strain for some time past, and longed for quiet. The absence of her nephews was the more bearable as Mrs. Archibald knew it was occasioned by application to their mercantile affairs, into which Henry Morton told her that with the aid of "old Grant," they had been able to throw the spirit that money alone can give.

A fortnight of this dull quiet had elapsed, but Margaret Morton, though quiet—she was always quiet—was by no means dull. Richard Archibald had altered his mind with regard to the book he had intended to publish, and instead of combining his essays in a single volume had commenced to publish them separately in a magazine, with the editor of which he had lately made acquaintance. This change in her cousin's intentions furnished Margaret Morton with that kind of work and excitement which were most congenial to her tastes and temperament. In now again going carefully through the manuscript, she often expanded the thoughts, and still more frequently condensed the expressions. It was a labour of love; not of love towards the author of the essay, but

of worshipful love towards her great idol, the Press, of which she was a secret but most sincere adorer. Margaret Morton did not labour at her cousin's essays with more earnestness than she would have bestowed on the manuscript of any other person for whom she might have undertaken the like service, but it would be wrong to say she did not feel an especial thrill of joy and pride in the praise Richard Archibald now freely bestowed on her performance.

There were many causes combined to make Miss Morton's gratification in her cousin's commendations very profound. In the first place, Richard's talents had always been held in high esteem by her uncle, whose opinion had the force of law on Margaret's mind. Mr. Archibald had always predicted that Richard would achieve distinction, because that, in addition to great talent, he possessed energy and perseverance, which would in the first instance carry him on to high mental culture, and in the next place would enable him to make the most of his acquirements. This was equivalent to saying Richard Archibald would not hide his light under a bushel; and so far his uncle was right, for not only would the nephew not willingly hide his light, but he

would do all in his power to place it in the highest candlestick manufactured in his time, and would afterwards endeavour to place the candlestick in the most eminent position to which by train or tramway he could transport it. Mrs. Archibald had naturally adopted her husband's opinions with regard to Richard; and since his death, since she had felt the oppressive unprotectedness of widowhood, she had learned to look upon the activity and manly courage of her nephew with a kind of reverential admiration. So far Margaret Morton had been trained to regard Richard Archibald as one highly endowed; and now that she saw Mr. Wynum, who was of the same mental type as her uncle, treat Richard on a footing of equality in the high-toned discussions that had lately formed their evening entertainments, it was no wonder that her previous opinions concerning him were confirmed. Neither can it be denied that the high estimate formed of Richard by such competent judges nourished in Margaret's mind no mean sense of her own capabilities. She was of the same school as Richard. She had been trained by her uncle for a longer period than he, and she possessed, as she was well aware, an extensive knowledge of subjects of which

he only knew enough to enable him to pass the stereotyped college examination. Still Richard's praise was dear to Margaret, and all the more because she saw he was proud of her, and recognized in hers a mind akin to his own.

And so the fortnight, which was one of profound quiet to Mrs. Archibald, was a time of intense, unobtrusive activity to her niece. She no longer had chatty mornings with her brother, for Henry Morton now, immediately after his nine o'clock breakfast, strolled into the garden, smoked a cigar, and then went off to the City. He seldom returned to Eva Terrace before ten at night, because he and Richard dined—businessly, as Harry expressed it—"with old Grant and folks of that class." Cornet Wynum no longer made morning calls, but, even if he had, his readings and conversation and gentle admiration would not have afforded Miss Morton the powerful mental stimulant she was imbibing from other sources.

A superficial observer, if put in possession of the bare facts of the case, might have pronounced Margaret Morton wholly occupied with thoughts of Richard Archibald, but the judgment would have been erroneous. Richard Archibald at the moment supplied the material from which the force was eliminated that

roused Margaret Morton's mind to action, but he was no more the agent of that action than the coal-waggon which brings fuel to the railway engine could be correctly described as the power that propels the locomotive. The truth was, Margaret Morton was ambitious, but her ambition was of a pure and lofty character. She had not been brought up to look on marriage as the grand pursuit of a woman's life; and though Richard Archibald occupied a large space in her mind, he was secondary—and at a great distance too—to the ideal after which she longed in secret. It would be untrue to say she did not set a high value on his praise: she thought more of his praise than of that of any other person in the world. She valued his esteem, because she knew it could not be lightly won, and because she knew it could only be secured by such qualities and acquirements as she had been taught to value. And if Richard Archibald held a secondary place in Margaret Morton's thoughts, he was second to *no person*; he was second only to her ambition, which was the same as his, ambition of literary distinction; for Richard Archibald was prouder of his articles in the *Lunar Gazette* than he ever would be of the reputation of millionaire which he was determined to attain. And of

Richard Archibald it must be said he had no idea of making literature a trade or mode of living. He intended the offspring of his pen should be regarded as the highest product of his intellect, and should prove that his commercial and professional success was not the result of accident, but the indigenous growth of the soil from whence they sprung.

And so Margaret Morton's ideal was, in reality, the same as Richard Archibald's. Both had been brought up under the same training by their uncle; both had been taught by him to appreciate authors, and to regard a good and well-written book, not alone with solemn, reverent, and warm admiration, but as one of the greatest of human achievements.

It would be difficult to describe correctly the points of resemblance and difference between Margaret Morton and Richard Archibald. The similarity discernible was the result of a common training,—the differences arose partly from natural diversity of character, and partly from the circumstances under which their characters had been developed. Richard Archibald began the battle of life early, and with an asperity of feeling that made him both defiant and self-reliant; but as he had never really wanted the means to supply the

comforts he had been brought up in, he was unacquainted with the worst aspect of life's conflict—poverty. Having been always able to fall back on monetary resources sufficient for his personal wants and indulgences, he had never known the humiliation of asking in vain. But instead of recognizing the advantages he had been able to command, he arrogated to himself a large credit for the success with which he had made his way. Self-reliance had gradually grown into self-sufficiency, until he finally believed he had a right to command everything within his reach that he deemed useful for the furtherance of his plans. Even more, the belief seemed to have taken root in his mind that all things within his circle must eventually, by some secret law, fall into the exact positions best calculated to exalt him and enhance the brilliancy of his success.

Margaret Morton's relations with the external world were utterly different from those of her cousin. She knew nothing of the rough realities of life, and her knowledge of society was included absolutely within the narrow circle of her aunt's acquaintance. Under her uncle's teaching she had early learned to form a vast idea of the capabilities of the human mind, or, in other words, she had learned to

form expanded views of the worlds of science and literature; and this knowledge had enlarged her ambition to know, and at the same time gave birth to that happy discontent which is in itself a powerful incentive to study. Margaret Morton never thought her education was finished—she never believed it could be as long as she retained the faculty of adding to her knowledge; so though Miss Morton had received what might be called a masculine education, she was really more simple and less tinctured with self-conceit than the typical young lady who at a “finishing school” learns the names of all the ologies.

One of the advantages or peculiarities of Margaret Morton’s training by her uncle was a great respect for the male sex—a sentiment sure to occupy a large space in the cultivated female mind. The more solid knowledge a woman acquires the more she becomes convinced that man was made to be master of the creation, and that his superior physical strength will always retain for him that mastery even in the world of mind, because physical strength is needed to exercise effectually in external life the intellectual force accumulated in the solitude of study. A good

man sometimes shrinks from doing business with a woman, because, recognizing the natural claims of the weaker vessel, he fears he might be induced to make concessions contrary to his commercial interests. A bad man when he employs a woman's talents makes in the first instance a hard bargain, giving her smaller proportionate remuneration than he would be obliged to give one of his own sex, and eventually defrauds her, if he can do so, with impunity. These are disadvantages to which a woman who faces the world single-handed must always be subjected. A woman working under the ægis of a husband or brother's shelter is differently placed; but the whole case is then reversed. The woman becomes secondary as far as life's external warfare is concerned, though she may be primary considered with regard to the labour actually performed.

And there is a truth which Margaret Morton at that time had not mastered, that the varied knowledge of life unavoidably acquired by men enables them to deal with one another in ordinary mercantile transactions with a freedom that can never be established between a man of gentlemanly feeling and a woman of educated sentiments. But there was still another truth of which Margaret Morton was

ignorant, and which is a fundamental principle of the great social contract—that the relations fixed by nature between man and woman will make man always regard woman as woman, and will oblige woman always to look up to man as man.

CHAPTER XIV.

IN virtue of the science she possessed and of the hopes she entertained, and spite of the truths whose knowledge had not yet penetrated her intellect, Margaret Morton was very happy during the fortnight that afforded her aunt such profound repose. Independent of the pleasure resulting from intellectual activity, she had the additional satisfaction of knowing that her brother and cousin were doing profitable business in the City.

All was tranquil at Eva Terrace. Whist was suspended. Mrs. Archibald spent the evening reclining, with half-closed eyes, on her couch. Miss Maunsell, who, as she said, could never sit with her hands before her, brought every evening an immense ball of Berlin wool—a forty-eight pounder in size—which she was engaged in manufacturing, by the agency of two long knitting-pins, into

what had begun to assume the appearance of a gentleman's comforter.

That huge Berlin ball had constituted Miss Maunsell's stock in the knitting trade for several years, and was likely to do so for several years longer, because that the comforter never reached a termination, and that for pretty much the same reason that the web of the Ithacian queen was never completed. When Miss Maunsell came within a short distance of what might be supposed to be the end of her labours, she drew out her pins, and, laying hold of the thread, pulled until every stitch became undone, when she complacently reset the fabric, and proceeded to knit the stitches off from pin to pin with an assiduity that to any one not acquainted with the fate of the preceding semi-demi comforters would give a notion of eager haste for completion on the part of the knitter. Miss Maunsell's comforter, like many apparent comforters, was destined never to afford consolation to any one.

Whilst Mrs. Archibald reposed languidly on her couch, and Miss Maunsell knitted or undid her comforter, Miss Morton chatted at the opposite end of the room with Miss Keel and Monsieur Claude. Sometimes Miss Keel did

not come, and Miss Morton and Monsieur Claude passed the evening very pleasantly together. Miss Morton found much satisfaction in the society of the young Frenchman, whose collegiate education had been most methodically carried out, and who had always been subjected to healthy home influences, moral, religious, and literary. His parents—his mother especially—were well versed in the classical literature of their language, and these works formed a favourite subject of conversation in Monsieur Claude's home. His own speciality was natural philosophy. He had lent Miss Morton several French works on that wide subject, and was surprised to find that, though the young lady did not speak French fluently, she was able not only to master the ideas of the French philosophers, as she did those of the French poets, but to appreciate the most delicate niceties of expression. This was a natural result of the mode in which Miss Morton had acquired a knowledge of the French language—critical analysis and close translation.

There were many points of resemblance between Miss Morton and Monsieur Claude. Both knew more of books than of society, and both judged their fellow-men by a very high

standard, which their actual experience of life had not yet caused them to lower. It may be supposed that the evenings passed pleasantly for these two young people.

The long lull at Eva Terrace was followed by great commotion, and that of an agreeable character. It began in this way. One afternoon Mrs. Green appeared before Miss Maunsell, presented Mr. Wynum's compliments, and a message to the effect that, if Miss Maunsell were quite at leisure, he would be glad of a few minutes' conversation. An answer in the affirmative, and Mr. Wynum was soon heard descending the stairs, and was quickly ushered into Miss Maunsell's sitting-room.

"Good morning, Miss Maunsell."

"Good morning, Mr. Wynum."

"I must apologize for intruding so early on a lady, but I've really come on a little matter of business."

"My dear sir, pray don't apologize. I only regret that 'tis business, not inclination, that procures me this pleasure."

"Miss Maunsell, you make me feel I'm a bungler."

"Pray don't say so. Take a seat, and we shall talk this business quietly over; but first let me ask how is Cornet Wynum?"

“Thank you, Miss Maunsell, he’s perfectly well and in high spirits.”

“Good gracious!” and Miss Maunsell lifted her hands and eyes towards the ceiling. “In high spirits! And going to leave his country and his father! O youth, youth!”

“Miss Maunsell, let us take a more cheering view. Young men must fight for their country. Where would be the safety for us at home if these young fellows didn’t fight for us abroad?”

“But, my dear sir, just think of all these beautiful young men going out to be shot.”

“No, Miss Maunsell, they don’t go out to be shot; they go out to shoot other people.”

“Oh, dreadful, dreadful! Somebody is sure to be shot; and then if they’re not shot they die of yellow fever. My dear uncle’s brother-in-law died of yellow fever in Jamaica, and left a widow and six children.”

“Jamaica, Miss Maunsell”—Mr. Wynum spoke doubtingly and even apologetically,—“is, I believe, in the West Indies, and my son is going to the East Indies.”

“That’s no matter, my dear sir; not the slightest matter. ’Tis all the same.”

“Well, Miss Maunsell, my son can’t leave a

widow and six children, at least for some time."

"Oh, what courage men have, and yourself amongst 'em, my dear sir, to talk so of losing your dear son."

"But, Miss Maunsell, I don't expect to lose him. I expect to see him come back colonel of a regiment."

"Oh, my dear sir, I envy you your great spirits. I wish I could see things as you do. I'm sure I sincerely hope you may live to see your dear son again; but this I know, yellow fever is a frightful sickness, and black fever is still worse."

"Well, well, Miss Maunsell, we must remember all who go to India don't die of fever. Mrs. Archibald's nephews have returned."

"Very true, my dear sir; but both their fathers died there."

This was unanswerable, and Miss Maunsell's Job-comforter position seemed for the moment impregnable. Mr. Wynum turned to another subject.

"Miss Maunsell, I cannot forget I've come to prefer a request,—in fact, to ask of you a very great favour."

"My dear sir, can I have the happiness?"

"The happiness, Miss Maunsell, will be mine, and none but you can confer it."

"My dear sir! what do you mean?"

"Miss Maunsell, I purpose to invite a few friends to dinner previous to my son's leaving for India. I'm come this morning to ask the favour of your company on the occasion."

"You're very good, Mr. Wynum, very good. I shall be most happy." And Miss Maunsell cast down her large blue eyes, and discreetly covered them with their large lids.

"But I've come, Miss Maunsell, to ask more than your presence as a guest. I've come to ask you to preside as mistress of the banquet."

"Really, sir,"—and the lady looked straight at her visitor,—“I don't understand.”

As Miss Maunsell spoke the colour fluttered on her cheek, and, contrary to her wont when at all excited, she became pale.

"Miss Maunsell"—and Mr. Wynum spoke gravely—"I've come to ask you to do me the honour of taking the head of the dinner-table, and doing the honours of the evening towards my guests."

Miss Maunsell cast down her eyes. Old hopes long buried in her heart had sprung suddenly

back into life, and hovered with suspended breath, awaiting Mr. Wynum's reply. 'That pronounced, they sunk quietly back, and were again earthed over.

Miss Maunsell having graciously accepted the honour offered by Mr. Wynum, some further conversation followed as to the best arrangements to be made, Mr. Wynum constantly protesting he had no opinion on the subject, because that, having so long suspended the exercise of hospitable functions, he had forgotten the duties of a host, and must be entirely dependent on Miss Maunsell's good sense and taste. It would be tedious to tell how often during these flattering speeches Miss Maunsell smiled and curtsied, and cast down her eyes, and lifted them, and protested Mr. Wynum was too flattering, but that he might reckon on every exertion in her power.

Mr. Wynum made his adieus and took his departure, having first drunk a couple of glasses of Miss Maunsell's excellent wine. Left alone, that good lady, seated in her easy-chair, spent some time in reflecting on the responsibilities she had undertaken, and how she could, with the greatest credit to herself and the largest amount of satisfaction to every other

person concerned, discharge the duties of the new position she had consented to fill. A few reminiscent sighs were heaved as the memory of departed hopes and recent expectations rose before her mind; but, banishing the intruding shadows, Miss Maunsell applied herself to the steady consideration of the business in hand. With regard to the intrusive memories, one word must be said. Mr. Wynum was not individually the cause of these recurring shadows, which were only the *débris* of a fabric destroyed by fate and originally reared by fancy. The large bearded portion of the human family, that had collectively helped to raise those airy hopes, was accountable for the demolition of the edifice.

In thinking over the coming entertainment, Miss Maunsell was thrown into a pleasurable flutter. She was to be, though temporarily, the joint authority at a well-served dinner-table, surrounded with select guests. It was a position Miss Maunsell knew she would grace, and pity it was she did not hold such permanently, with a worthy joint proprietor; then would her really large sympathies have found a genial arena for their exercise, and the little peculiarities of character that provoked a smile never have been evoked.

But come what may, Miss Maunsell was to be for one day at least the distributor of pleasure, the dispenser of joy. She summoned Mrs. Green and informed her of what was about to occur. Mrs. Green was amazed. That judicious lady remembered how her house had been upset for Miss Maunsell's dinner-party on the 1st of May, and the present announcement sounded like the knell of her peace. But she made no remark, well aware that remonstrance or observation would not improve matters. So, whilst apparently listening to the details of Miss Maunsell's proposed arrangements, Mrs. Green was secretly comforting herself with the remembrance of the vast remains of Miss Maunsell's entertainment, which had not only provided for the wants of the landlady and her immediate family during the greater part of a fortnight, but had enabled her to make some handsome presents to her friends. Mr. Wynum would no doubt be equally liberal in providing for his guests, and perforce Mrs. Green would benefit proportionately. A few hazarded remarks in the direction of the viands elicited the astounding intelligence that Mr. Wynum intended to order dinner from a celebrated restaurant, whose servants would bring soup,

fish, meats of all kinds, confectionery and dessert, and attend table. Nothing was to be prepared in the house. Mrs. Green's heart died within her. Would these attendants carry off the remains of the feast? She dared not venture the inquiry, but uncertainty on that point disturbed her soul. However, she was obliged to give attention to Miss Maunsell's announced intentions with regard to her part in the coming festivities, and these intentions were, in Mrs. Green's estimation, prodigious.

Having listened to all her lady-lodger had to say, Mrs. Green retired, and with her she carried food for thought. She thought of the coming dinner, but she did not think of it as a mere outspread of luxurious eatables and drinkables; she thought of it as the result of some great moral truth of which she was ignorant. It is not to be supposed that a woman of Mrs. Green's inquiring mind could be happy in a state of conscious ignorance. Her understanding was too large to be satisfied with a view of the mere superficies of any subject, her intelligence was too keen not to seek instinctively to penetrate the surface, and discover, if possible, the springs of action. It may not be too much to say that Mrs. Green was a philosopher, and, this being conceded, it

must be added that the leading maxim of Mrs. Green's philosophy was to keep her own interests always in view. If she ever infringed this fundamental law of her conduct, it was only when a too-ardent search for knowledge hurried her along in over-eager haste. But now, happily, her interest and her desire for information pointed in the same direction. Mrs. Green could not believe that Mr. Wynum, who had lived so long and so quietly in her house, would commence to make parties at Richmond and give dinners at home because his son was going to India. More natural, thought Mrs. Green, that he and his son should dine together every day and enjoy as much as they could of each other's society. And then to engage one of the grandest confectioners in London to get up the dinner at her house! There must be something in it. Was Cornet Wynum going to be married? Had Miss Morton really a great fortune after all? Fortune or no fortune, married or not married, there was something going on of which she was ignorant, and which it hurt her conscience not to know. Mrs. Green fell into a long train of reflection, and finally resolved to pump Clifton.

It might be supposed that to pump Clifton,

after the terrible commotion that had resulted from the previous great hydraulic operation, would be no easy task; but one of the not least remarkable traits in Mrs. Green's character was the power she possessed of soothing, or rather lulling, completely to rest the mind she had previously worked up into irritation. And the opiate treatment was so skilfully applied that the irritant effects of the previous application were totally forgotten.

After the grand conference between Mrs. Green and Clifton, the latter, humbled by fresh convictions of the superior talents of her serpentine neighbour, shunned her society, and though in Mrs. Green's frequent calls at Eva Terrace—for Miss Maunsell would not always dispense with her attendance—she was sometimes, unavoidably, brought into contact with her, Clifton did all she could to make these interviews of the shortest. Such also seemed to be the policy of Mrs. Green, who, as closely as she could, timed her official call at Eva Terrace to the moment when Miss Maunsell was ready to leave. Instead of going down to the housekeeper's room, she stood in the hall, after being admitted by Mary, and if Clifton chanced to appear, a friendly salute satisfied their mutual feelings. Some weeks

had passed, and Mrs. Green's manner was so quietly self-possessed, so unobtrusive, so uninquisitive—she was, in short, so taciturn—that Clifton's jealous anger gradually softened down, her distrust of her serpentine neighbour became less rampant, until she finally forgot that any cause of anger had ever arisen between them, and her deference for Mrs. Green's local knowledge and general ability was again in the ascendant.

Clifton having fallen back into that mental condition in which she ordinarily succumbed to her serpentine neighbour's influences, Mrs. Green paid her an evening visit, and was received with the respect which her acknowledged talents always secured in the circles where she was known. Whilst the two ladies in the basement were improving their minds, giving and receiving knowledge, we shall look above and see what was passing in the drawing-room.

Miss Maunsell was sitting with Mrs. Archibald and her niece. The three were in high spirits, and laughing, not unfrequently, at Miss Maunsell's account of the transpositions already effected in the furniture of the first floor at St. John's Terrace, and of the precautions taken by Mrs. Green that nothing should

be left in Mr. Wynum's way on his return home.

"Really, Ellen," said Mrs. Archibald, "matters begin to look serious in your house. When a gentleman asks a lady to take the head of his table, one may suppose he has serious intentions."

"Nonsense, dear. How can you go on so? 'Tis merely as a friend I'm asked to preside. So many ladies being invited, a lady ought to preside."

"Of course. But I do think many ladies would be misled by such an invitation. It reflects great credit on your discernment, Ellen, that you immediately understood his meaning."

"I should be a great muff, dear, if I misunderstood him."

"Jests apart, Ellen, you have undertaken some trouble, seeing all the preparations that must be accomplished within four days. However, don't forget, everything in this house is at your service. Clifton, too, can go over and help Mrs. Green."

"Oh, thank you—thank you, dear! We shall certainly want many things, and Clifton's help will be invaluable. But here comes Monsieur Claude."

The new arrival informed the ladies, upon being questioned, that his mother and family had received invitations to dine with Mr. Wynum on the following Thursday. Monsieur Claude agreed with Miss Maunsell in believing it would be a brilliant affair, and from his own experience spoke warmly of the manner in which Mr. Wynum and son discharged the duties of hosts. The subject of the dinner being exhausted, as far as anticipation went, Mrs. Archibald leaned back on her couch, Miss Maunsell resumed the undoing of her comforter, and Monsieur Claude, who possessed considerable knowledge of music and sang well, took from his pocket the copy of a French song of which he had spoken to Miss Morton, and, under the shelter of this harmonious piece of paper, both withdrew to the compartment of the drawing-room, at the off-side of the folding-doors, where the piano stood. There Monsieur Claude tried his song in a low tone, and Miss Morton, who had no singing voice, listened and approved. The subject of the song having been thoroughly talked over, one of the never-ending literary discussions was taken up, and treated so discursively, that many wanderings were made into other matters. On the whole, Miss

Morton and Monsieur Claude found when ten o'clock arrived that they had passed a very pleasant evening.

Miss Maunsell was by this time equipped for her departure, and left, accompanied by Monsieur Claude and attended by Mrs. Green.

CHAPTER XV.

THE tide of our narrative here takes a refluent course, and, instead of flowing freely onwards from 10 P.M., turns backwards, and compels us to note down what occurred in Mrs. Archibald's basement story from 7 P.M. to the moment when Mrs. Green re-assumed her bonnet and shawl for the purpose of walking behind Miss Maunsell and Monsieur Claude as they wended their way towards St. John's Terrace.

Whilst Mrs. Archibald was half slumbering on her couch, Miss Maunsell undoing her comforter, and Monsieur Claude murmuring his French song, Mrs. Green was actively applying the pumping process to her friend Clifton. The latter had easily succumbed to the wily manœuvres of the serpentine Green, and, whilst continually protesting that she knew she spoke out of her turn, gave her neighbour all th

information she sought; whilst Mrs. Green, attributing to chance all she knew of other people's affairs, astounded Clifton by the intelligence of the contemplated dinner.

"Of course I don't know anything," said Clifton, "and I know I speak out of my turn; but this I'll say, this house isn't like what it was when Mr. Archibald was alive. I know I speak out of my turn, but them two young gentlemen—to be sure, they was only lads then—I could speak to 'em and direct 'em, and they 'd do my bidding; but now if I say a word Mr. Richard flies up. One don't know what to make of 'im. I know I speak out of my turn; but still, for all, he might listen to an old friend, though I *am* a servant. His dear uncle would listen to me. I know I speak out of my turn, but this house is changed."

"Well but, Mrs. Clifton, I'll answer for it Mr. Richard knows you're a friend. But maybe 't isn't what you said as made him fire up, but what he knew before. Let me fill your glass. You may be sure that wine's good: Miss Maunsell gave it me this morning. She's a good creature, though sometimes hasty. 'Green,' says she, 'you'll have a great deal of work turning out these rooms

and moving all this furniture ; here's a bottle of good old sherry. Take a couple of glasses at your dinner, 'twill do you good.' But, as I was saying, maybe 'twas what he knew already about Cornet Wynum that angered him."

The serpentine Mrs. Green divined that if Richard Archibald fired up, it must have been in reference to Cornet Wynum. She wished to be certain whether she had laid the train that fired him.

"Well, I don't know," said Clifton, "whether he knew anything, or whether he noticed anything ; but I know he fired up when I pointed out what I noticed myself, and what others told me. I know I speak out of my turn, but that's the truth."

"And you knew nothing of the dinner, dear, till I told you?"

"Not a word, Mrs. Green, not a word. I'm not told much in this house now."

"Well, Mrs. Clifton, I think you ought to be law here."

"I law, Mrs. Green? Very kind of you to say so. There are them now as thinks otherwise. I know I speak out of my turn, but I never hear a word of news only when a friend drops in ; and I'm sure I can say you're the

only friend that crosses this threshold from year's end to year's end. Not a drop more, dear; I so seldom take anything. Well, I don't mind half a glass. See, now, if you didn't fill it a'most to the brim."

"'Twas by chance," resumed Mrs. Green, "that I first heard of the dinner. I was coming upstairs, and to be sure I was surprised that Mr. Wynum should be paying Miss Maunsell a visit, seeing he passes her door morning and night, day after day, and never knocks, except when his son first came back. And certain it is, and I'll always say so, whatever Mr. Wynum's faults may be, he's a perfect gentleman. And surely I *was* surprised when he told me to take his compliments to Miss Maunsell, and ask if he might call on her. So, as I was saying, I was coming upstairs, and I knelt to fix the mat and settle the carpet on the last step. You know 'tis very hard to keep the mat straight when a gentleman goes up and down leaning so heavy on his stick, and Mr. Wynum do fire up so when he thinks he's near being tripped. So when I was a-fixing the mat, and the door being open by chance, I heard what was said. You know I couldn't help it, Mrs. Clifton?"

Clifton shook her head, and frowned an imperative negative.

“So that was how I heard the first of the dinner. And then the bell was rung, and I brought wine, and I heard talk of such doings. ‘Well,’ thinks I to myself, ‘this is goings on. More like a wedding than a parting, I think.’ But maybe there’s a wedding at the bottom of it. Would your young lady, dear, have any notion of the Cornet after all?”

“No more than you have, Mrs. Green. No one knows more about Miss Morton than myself. She’s as proud as her aunt, and as close-minded; but I know she’ll be her cousin’s wife or nobody’s. I know,” went on Clifton, for Mrs. Green’s serpentine potations had excited her, “I know I speak out of my turn. I think as much of Miss Margaret as I do of her brother and Master Richard; but the money is with the gentlemen, and she must marry her cousin.”

“Well, now, dear; and that’s the case?”

“’Tis, Mrs. Green. She must marry her cousin. I love her the same as the rest. She’s proud—they’re all proud—I like ’em the better for it,—but I say she must marry her cousin. ’Twas settled long ago between her uncle and aunt. I know I speak out of my turn, but what I says is the truth.”

“If you say it, Mrs. Clifton, that’s enough; you must know all about this family by this time. And you think there is nothing in this dinner?”

“I don’t say that, Mrs. Green. There’s something in it, but what it is I can’t say, and for that reason I can’t tell.”

“No, certainly, dear. Bless me! there’s the bell to say my lady’s ready. Well, good night, dear. Give Dumpling a kiss for me. I’m sorry I didn’t see her.”

“You must come earlier next time.”

“Oh, thank you, Mrs. Clifton, thank you. Good night.”

Mrs. Green took her place in the rear of Miss Maunsell, feeling that she had not added to her previous stock of positive knowledge, though she had heard sufficient to confirm some suspicions that existed in her mind.

Poor Clifton woke next morning to face the self-confusion of knowing that she had again on the past evening committed herself, and to feel, what she had so often felt before, that she was no match for the serpentine Mrs. Green, and to repeat the vow, so often made and as often broken, that she would “shun that woman’s company.”

CHAPTER XVI.

It would be doing Miss Maunsell injustice not to record that, entering fully into the spirit of the honorary dignity to which Mr. Wynum had advanced her as mistress of the coming banquet, she had initiated some important changes in the character and furniture of her apartments. In the first place, she had thrown open the folding-doors that separated her sitting from her sleeping room, intending to enlarge the space wherein she was to exercise the hospitalities of the eventful evening. Having removed these barriers, Miss Maunsell next proceeded to order the removal of everything that could leave a trace or generate a suspicion that the room had ever served other than drawing-room purposes. In carrying out these changes, Miss Maunsell had submitted to some personal inconveniences, amongst which may be reckoned the removal of her bed, and the sleeping apparatus connected therewith, to a

room at the top of the house where she kept her boxes and other luggage.

During three days had Miss Maunsell toiled on the first floor transposing and beautifying ; and on the three nights of these three days had she crept as softly and lightly as any lady of her tonnage could be expected to up the stairs that led to the chamber, erst her lumber-room, for the nonce her sleeping-apartment.

During these three days Mr. Wynum's conduct was noteworthy. He affected not to see, though he was cautious to avoid, small articles forgotten on the stairs. He seemed not to perceive the general transfiguration of the house as manifested in many changes in his own sitting-room, and as exhibited through the almost constantly open doors of Miss Maunsell's apartments. That lady's absence from Mrs. Archibald's card-table on Tuesday and Wednesday evenings he noticed with a careless—"Our friend Miss Maunsell has not honoured us this evening"; but during these three days Mr. Wynum was studiously observant to inquire every morning of Mrs. Green after Miss Maunsell's health, and send his compliments to his fellow-lodger. And on each of these evenings Mr. Wynum repeated the inquiries and messages of the morning as he stood on the

mat inside the house-door, and he made his inquiries in a tone sufficiently audible to reach the ears of the lady who was their subject, and whom the gentleman shrewdly suspected was within ear-shot.

But three days did not afford sufficient time for the completion of the many radical changes designed by Miss Maunsell, and in the carrying out of which frequent experimental alterations were made in the details. Sometimes pictures were shifted from wall to wall, until they were finally so posited as, in Miss Maunsell's opinion, to be seen to the best advantage; chairs changed places and went back again, lounges *chassé-croisé* with what-nots, and easy-chairs, standing upright at one end of the room, found themselves, at the expiration of an hour, landed at the opposite extremity of the apartment. In short, the furniture seemed to be performing a country dance of complicated figure, where some of the performers acted independently. On Wednesday evening, however, the chairs and tables, the candelabra and what-nots, the easy-chairs and *causeuses*, were permanently placed, and looked as much at their ease as though they had never known any other resting-place. Miss Maunsell was pleased with her work; and

as she stood in the framework of the folding-doors—the *battants* were removed—her face beamed with satisfaction. The curtains fell in graceful folds, the footstools were adjusted to the angle where they would afford most ease to a lady's feet: everything seemed to be in the best position that the circumstances of the case permitted.

"All the rough work is done, Green," said Miss Maunsell. "I think the rooms look very well."

"They look lovely, ma'am; and no wonder, with all the trouble you've took and all the taste you've showed."

"There was a time, Green, when my taste was thought much of and consulted; but, dear me, time flies. Well, Green, we've worked hard, and I haven't seen Mrs. Archibald to-day."

"'Tisn't often you stay away from her, ma'am."

"No, indeed. For the last eight years I don't think there have been eight days in which we haven't met. Now, Green, the rough work is done: we'll bring down the ornaments to-morrow morning, and finish everything off early, so as to have a long day before us. You get the supper-tray, as I dined early. You get your own supper, too; and as soon as

Mr. Wynum is in, you go to bed. We must be up early,—very early, Green; there is a great deal yet to be done.”

Green knew there was a great deal to be done; and of the contemplated works, first in importance at that moment, in her estimation, ranked supper, which Green took care should be nice and hot and palatable; and of which Miss Maunsell took care that Green should largely partake. Whilst enjoying the comfortable supper, washed down with a good “stiff glass of something hot,” Green ruminated on the significance of what was going on in her house.

“There’s something in it,” said Green, “that I can’t see through, and that Mrs. Clifton can’t see through. I wish Thursday was come and over; that’s my wish about it.”

Clifton, too, wished that Thursday were come and over; for she knew she should have to pass the greater part of that day in the society of her serpentine neighbour, and the sense of her recent humiliations had not yet passed away. Miss Maunsell wished Thursday were come because of the dignity and pleasures she hoped to enjoy; and Cornet Wynum wished Thursday were come because he should again see Miss Morton.

CHAPTER XVII.

IN no way excited by Mrs. Green's perplexities, wholly uninfluenced by Clifton's conscience-stricken self-humiliation, utterly indifferent to Miss Maunsell's fluttering expectations and Cornet Wynum's fond anxieties—for to these personages it seemed as though Thursday would never come, to solve their doubts or satisfy their longings—the sun pursued his wonted methodical course. Indeed, so far from hastening to usher in the desired day, he seemed inclined to retard its appearance, and rose some minutes later each morning, which to the expectants of that much-desired Thursday looked like premeditated cruelty. The great solar body, being an aristocrat of the first magnitude, exposed himself in unscientific minds to the suspicion of despising the festivities of poor terrestrials, and of wishing to show his importance by coming late to their banquetings. Such would be a pretty fair

verbal interpretation of the thoughts of Clifton and Mrs. Green, who, not having accurate notions of Sol's apparent movements, accredited him with a punctuality in rising which he does not merit. But, without attempting to unravel details of which they understood nothing, both ladies contented themselves with confiding to each other when they met that they really thought the sun would never have risen that morning.

It might be thought that Miss Maunsell, too, had doubts as to the honour of the sun in keeping an implied engagement, and suspected that he meant to play a naughty hide-and-seek trick on three female creatures that expectingly believed in him. Miss Maunsell assured her friend, Mrs. Archibald, on Thursday evening, that she had not "closed an eye" from the previous midnight.

Mr. Wynum entertained no detracting doubts about the sun's rising on that especial morning. His scientific knowledge would have defended him against such disturbing fancies. He could experience no surprise at finding that the sun had not left his pleasant elastic water-bed at five o'clock or even at six on a London morning at the beginning of October; and as to absenting himself for a day from taking a look at his

terrestrial domains, Mr. Wynum would have laughingly pooh-poohed the idea, and observed that Phœbus, after his experience with Phaeton, was not likely to give the reins out of his own hands.

But however obviously tranquil Mr. Wynum might have felt with regard to the sun's appearance on the day in question, he could have no doubt about the hour at which Miss Maunsell and his landlady rose. It was strange, and by a cross-examining counsel might have been noted down as an important fact, contradictory of assertions concerning night-long unclosed eyes, that about seven o'clock on the morning of Thursday, 16th October, 1851, both Miss Maunsell and Mrs. Green started from their beds believing the morning light to be noon-tide blaze. Mrs. Green, having hastily donned a few indispensable garments, hurried to Miss Maunsell's door with the information that the sun had risen. The lady-lodger was aware of the fact, and her toilette not being a whit more advanced than Mrs. Green's, she recommended the latter to return to her sleeping-room, clothe herself more comfortably, and then come back, when they should commence their joint operations. Green obeyed, and having "tidied up" the room in which Miss

Maunsell had slept, both descended to the first floor, carrying with them some small articles of *virtù*, meant to adorn the lower apartments, and which during the recent changes had been removed upstairs, so as to be beyond the reach of accident. Having translated the first load of ornaments to the assigned places, the bearers returned for a fresh supply, Mrs. Green carrying a small table, which was pronounced to be superfluous on the first floor. In these staircase journeyings made by Mrs. Green, either alone or accompanied by Miss Maunsell, the latter manifested great anxiety lest Mr. Wynum's slumbers should be disturbed. To avert such a disaster, Miss Maunsell did not cease exhorting Mrs. Green to tread lightly, which the poor woman declared she was doing to the best of her ability. But the lady-lodger, who did not reflect that her own specific gravity was double that of her landlady's, was by no means so successful in making her footfalls near to noiseless. They were just sufficiently loud to give a hearer the notion of stealthiness; and this, combined with whispered admonitions and half-murmured exclamations, was highly suggestive of the presence of thieves in the house. Such was the effect produced on Mr. Wynum, who, being nowise desirous of

receiving early calls from the reputed father of Phaeton, slept with his windows completely darkened. Disturbed, but not thoroughly awakened, by the stealthy movements on the staircase, his first thought was of self-defence—not a very pleasant one to an elderly gentleman; but at the very moment this idea flashed through his mind, a crash on the staircase and a loud ejaculation from Mrs. Green explained the source of the disturbance. Exasperated all the more because of a feeling very like fear which the thought of robbers had called into his mind, Mr. Wynum sprang from his bed, and suddenly opening his door, thrust out his head, calling aloud,—

“What devil’s tattoo is this you’re making?”

“Good gracious!” shrieked Miss Maunsell, who was standing on the landing immediately outside the opened door.

“What devil’s tattoo—?” repeated the gentleman. He would have finished the commenced inquiry, and in the same strain and tone, but that his eyes falling on the figure just before him, he seemed suddenly to lose the power of articulation. Miss Maunsell, startled into one vehement ejaculation, had subsided into a staring silence, in which she remained with her eyes fixed on the nightcap-

crowned head obtruded through the doorway. The head regarded her with equal fixity of gaze. Each seemed to act on the other with a Medusa-like power. If Mr. Wynum was disfigured by the presence of a nightcap, Miss Maunsell was unrecognizably transformed by the absence of her wig and the extraordinary shortness of her garments, which combined circumstances detracted at least two inches from her apparent height. Mr. Wynum had, at first, no suspicion that the grotesque figure that riveted his gaze and paralyzed his articulation was his accomplished fellow-lodger, his charming whist-table companion, and the elected mistress of his coming banquet. But as he stared, at first stupidly, and gradually consciously, he recognized the truth, and felt he was in the living presence of Miss Maunsell. When Mr. Wynum became thoroughly conscious of this fact, and his brain had recovered its activity, he pulled back his head from within its jammed framework without uttering a word. The scene did not occupy two minutes in action, but it made a profound impression on the lady and gentleman performers therein.

“How extraordinary he looked in his night-cap!” observed Miss Maunsell, when in her own

room. "And how old he looks without his teeth!"

"Well, he do look rather queer, certain, ma'am," replied the landlady.

"Oh, but Green, you're accustomed to see him, and don't mind it."

"I beg your pardon, ma'am," said Green, bridling up. "I never seen 'im that way before."

"Well, Green, it ought to be a lesson to us."

"So I think, too, ma'am," said Green, drily.

"I suppose I look a fright myself?—indeed, I'm sure I do."

"Oh, not at all, ma'am. Besides," added the serpentine landlady, who had read Mr. Wynum's looks very accurately, "I'm sure he didn't know you."

"Do you think so, Green? Well, so much the better. But, good gracious! what a difference dress makes!"

So, too, thought Mr. Wynum, as he returned to communicate the first-fruits of his late experience to his pillow, for it was to that article apparently he addressed the following observations:—

"When a woman has passed the age for associating with the Graces, she ought to be very assiduous in her devotions to Juno."

Acting on Green's suggestion, Miss Maunsell for the moment postponed the intention of adorning the first floor, and sat down to an early breakfast. Mr. Wynum's bell rang in due time, and Mrs. Green attended the summons with fearless alacrity. She was too good a judge of character to apprehend any allusion to the discomfitures of the morning. And Mrs. Green was in the right. With more than ordinary suavity, Mr. Wynum asked for breakfast; and whilst Mrs. Green was arranging the table he announced his intention of retiring immediately after the meal to his bed-room, as he had letters to write, and wished to be quite undisturbed. Mrs. Green curtsied submission with as much gravity as though she did not understand that the gentleman's real motives for retiring from public view were to give her and Miss Maunsell an opportunity of making preparations for the dinner which was to come off at six o'clock. He further informed his landlady that he should go out about two, as he had business in the City, and wished to call on Cornet Wynum.

"But, Mrs. Green," he added, in his softest manner, "you needn't be flurried in the least. Gunter's men will bring everything and arrange everything."

"Yes, sir; thank you, sir," said Mrs. Green, with a curtsy, and left the room.

"Well, good gracious!" said that worthy woman, as she slowly descended the stairs, stroking her clean white apron, though its smooth surface presented no wrinkle, "if mankind's not the depth of craft and cunning." Mrs. Green used the noun of multitude in the singular, and applied it strictly to the masculine portion of the human family. "'Don't be flurried in the least, Mrs. Green.' Of course not, sir. There's nothing to be flurried about. Only fourteen or fifteen people to dinner, and a crowd of men and servants in the kitchen, and the house turned upside down, and all to put straight again when the flurry's over; and he a-sitting in his bed-room, pretending to be a-writing letters; that's that he shouldn't see the work going on. But the worst of it all is, I don't know what 'tis all about. Well, that's more than could be said of anything that ever took place in my house before. But 't isn't finished yet. 'Twill go hard if I don't make something out. 'Twould be unnatural if I didn't. And Mrs. Clifton will be here this afternoon! Oh, yes, indeed! Will she speak out of her turn, I wonder? Well, well! what fools women are, and the old fools worst of

any. There's poor Miss Maunsell, up since daylight, and working her poor old joints, running up and down stairs without a stitch of the wig on her poor head, but all wrapped up in flannels. Well, I think Mr. Wynum did get a fright he won't forget for some time,"—here Mrs. Green laughed!—"and all the while I don't know what 'tis about, nor what I'll gain by it; but I'll try to make something of it."

Mrs. Green, thus soliloquizing, had slowly descended the stairs, and reached the landing.

"Why, good gracious, Green!" said Miss Maunsell, whose door stood open, "what *are* you about? Here you've been talking on the stairs for a quarter of an hour. I thought Mr. Wynum was speaking to you. I was afraid to come out."

Miss Maunsell had on the previous evening remarked, and truly, that the rough work was over in her apartments. The same might be said of Mr. Wynum's portion of the house. The damask curtains of his sitting-room had, like Miss Maunsell's, been taken down, well shaken and brushed, and afterwards restored to their original position, where, associated with fresh white muslin ones, they made a very respectable appearance. The carpets had been submitted to a chemical process, by which the

flowers had been revived as though the feet of Spring had tripped over the surface and called up the white daisies from a lower depth than the green worsted soil on which they were embroidered.

So far all was satisfactory. In the upper part of the house the only important move that remained to be made was to lay the dinner-table. Miss Maunsell, on her own responsibility—for Mr. Wynum would not be consulted, he left everything to her—had borrowed plate, glass, and china from Mrs. Archibald.

About eleven o'clock on Thursday morning Clifton arrived, walking beside a cart in which were three hampers, containing what Miss Maunsell wished from Eva Terrace. There was another point on which the lady-president had her own way. Mr. Wynum wished the dinner to be served *à la Russe*; Miss Maunsell would not hear of it. It was a cold, uncomfortable, ceremonious style, by which the mistress of the house was snuffed out, and Miss Maunsell laughed at the idea of being "snuffed out"; but she was of the old school, and, though she did not like to say so, she was a good carver, and liked to exercise her talents in that line. She was fond of seeing a good dinner served up comfortable and smoking, as

her dear mother always had it. Then the master and mistress of a house looked like a master and mistress, and did the honours of their table, and saw after the comfort of their guests.

The arguments were so powerful, and the lady was so eloquent, that the point was conceded. Besides, Mr. Wynum, too, was a good carver, and no ways loth to undertake functions he could well discharge, his preference of the *à la Russe* to the homely style arising solely from the belief that the former was the more fashionable. Mr. Wynum yielded with good grace to the persuasion of the mistress-elect, who did not forget to honey over her arguments with finely insinuated compliments to his talents as master of a dinner-table—talents which Miss Maunsell shuddered to think would be ignominiously buried under the foreign dinner system.

The porters had scarcely landed the hampers containing Mrs. Archibald's contributions, when fresh messengers arrived, bringing cases filled with the finest flowers that the best-supplied florist could afford. These were sent by Cornet Wynum, who, with Miss Maunsell's approval, had undertaken to supervise the floral department. There was a charming

bouquet for Miss Maunsell, accompanied by a still more charming note, containing, amongst other sentiments, many thanks for the pains and taste she was lavishing to make others happy. "That delightful young man," Miss Maunsell assured Mrs. Green, "reminded her of his father."

Whilst vases of china and of glass were being filled with flowers and distributed to the best advantage on tables, mantel-pieces, and brackets in the drawing-room, on the first floor, and on the staircase, Mr. Wynum contrived to leave the house unobserved. The first evidence manifested of his absence was the discovery of the house-door being ajar. He had feared to call attention by slamming it to.

"Oh, the dear gentle creature!" cried out Miss Maunsell; "he wouldn't disturb us. Just think of that. Well, Green, it must be said he's a perfect gentleman."

"He is, indeed, ma'am," said Green, as she left the room, carrying a large bouquet intended for the dinner-table. When Green reached the drawing-room, she deposited the bouquet on a plate, seated herself on a chair close at hand, crossed her arms on her waist, allowed her head to sink on her breast, and seemed suddenly plunged in profound medi-

tation. After a few minutes she lifted her face, and, apparently addressing an *épergne* that stood in the centre of the table, broke out with, "Oh, the depths of mankind! the depths of mankind!" Mrs. Green still used the word according to her own definition. "He slips out as light as a mouse. His son could hardly do it. And why? For fear of coming on the poor women that are slaving and working and toiling for his company. He slips out! Him that knows how to let himself be heard every day in the week. Well, well, I say there's no coming up to the depths of *mankind*. An' he wouldn't shut the door behind him for fear we'd hear him or see him. And that poor, simple woman below says 'tis because he's a perfect gentleman; I say 'tis because he's a perfect rogue, like the rest of 'em. And he'll come in presently, bowing and smiling, and saying how beautiful Gunter's men did their work, an' not one of 'em has put a foot in this house to-day, nor won't, of course, till five o'clock, I suppose. Well, well, a woman's work's never done; and what thanks do we get? An' that poor woman below stairs! What is she working for? Does she think he'll marry her? He'd outwit her and twenty more besides, old as he is; and I don't say he

won't do it, too. Oh, the depths of mankind is great! But I must say 'twas clever to slip out that way; an' I could a'most take my Bible oath I was never three minutes off them stairs to-day. But this I will say, '*twas* clever.'

And Mrs. Green's face brightened as she admiringly meditated on the operations of a spirit "serpentine" as her own.

Gunter's men arrived about half-past four, and even Mrs. Green, who in her best dress and most hypercritical mood watched their proceedings, was forced to own that their skill and celerity exceeded anything she had expected. She communicated her opinions on the subject to Mrs. Clifton, who readily endorsed her hostess's remarks.

At a few minutes past five a cab drove up to Mrs. Green's, and out stepped Mr. Wynum and son. The young officer wore a military cloak over his full-dress regimentals. Mr. Wynum led the way to his bed-room, from which both gentlemen soon emerged, intending to descend to the first floor. On their way they stepped in to inspect the dinner-table and the general arrangements made for the reception of the guests. Mr. Wynum having ascertained from Mrs. Green that Miss Maunsell was ready to receive, instructed the landlady

to go before and formally announce him and his son.

This was done, and Miss Maunsell rose from an easy-chair, bland, radiant, and dignified, to receive the gentlemen. What a contrast did Mr. Wynum and Miss Maunsell now present to the two individuals who, in the early morning, had wonderingly stared at each other! Mr. Wynum observed with satisfaction that the lady-president had paid her devotions to Juno, and his eye rested with pleasure on the flowing dress of flowered silk, which added as much to the apparent height of the wearer as her scant costume of the morning had detracted therefrom. Her hair was now arranged in gentle waves, approaching to festoons, on either side of her high forehead; a border of white lace, tastefully interspersed with loops of pink gauze ribbon, overtopped the hair, and on one side rested a beautiful blush rose. The old fond delusion of a black back to the head-dress was still persistently maintained, in the kindly intention of persuading the general public that the blackness represented hair. On either side of this cap or head-dress flowed long pendants of pink gauze ribbon, corresponding with that which adorned the top. Miss Maunsell's full face and short but fleshy throat did not require—

indeed, would not admit—the tying of strings beneath her chin; so with these bright pennants flying, and her constitutionally good colour heightened by the excitement of the moment, and what with the lace and jewellery judiciously brought to aid, Mr. Wynum felt perfectly conscience-free as he complimented the lady on her appearance.

“The wonders dress can do for the finest-looking man!” This axiom took an ejaculatory form in Miss Maunsell’s mind, as she beheld Mr. Wynum fresh from his toilette, his beard combed down and his hair—sparse certainly on the crown of his head—judiciously arranged.

“Miss Maunsell,” said the elder gentleman, bowing low as he touched the lady’s hand, “allow me to congratulate you on the triumph your taste has achieved here to-day. The house is transformed, absolutely transformed. It is odoriferous as a flower-arbour, and the dinner-table is perfection.”

“My dear sir, you’re really too good; you praise my poor endeavours too highly. As for the flowers, your amiable son sent so abundant a supply, that we had an *embarras de richesse*; and as to these men that have come about the dinner, poor Green is delighted with ’em.”

“Still, Miss Maunsell, all would have been useless but for the presiding genius of your taste.”

“My dear sir, I’m amply recompensed for anything I’ve done.”

Then Mr. Wynum again complimented Miss Maunsell on her good looks, and took the liberty, as an old friend, to say that the elegance of her toilette was a further proof of her excellent taste. Miss Maunsell responded to these compliments in a strain that made Mr. Wynum feel that the time bestowed that day on his own toilette had not been misspent.

Whilst this elderly lady and gentleman were complimenting each other on their respective good looks, which was equivalent to saying how wonderfully art can repair, or at least help, to hide the devastations made by time, neither thought of uttering a word in commendation of the general appearance of Cornet Wynum, who stood by, gazing with looks of affection and admiration on his father, and quite ready to embrace Miss Maunsell in acknowledgment of the cordiality with which she complimented him.

Now the guests began to appear. The first arrivals were Captain Wilmot and Cornets Rogers and Staunton, all in full regimentals.

The three military strangers were presented to the lady of the house, who had scarcely time to exchange a few words with each, when a brougham drove up and landed Mrs. Archibald, Miss Morton, her brother, and Mr. Archibald. Close on the wheels of this vehicle came another, from which Monsieur Charleroi handed his wife, who, taking her husband's arm, and followed by her son, ascended the steps leading to the house. Mrs. Archibald, with her niece and nephews, was still in the passage. Mrs. Archibald, perceiving Madame Charleroi, advanced, shook hands, and stood back to give her precedence, which the French lady by a retreating movement declined. A few seconds of polite hesitation and amiable refusals, expressed in gracious dumb-show, followed, when Mrs. Archibald, bowing graciously, said,—

“Madame Charleroi, you don't wish to enter first. Will you allow me Monsieur Charleroi's escort, whilst you accept my nephew's?”

The exchange was instantly effected, Mrs. Archibald taking the arm of Monsieur Charleroi, and Richard Archibald presenting his to Madame. By this arrangement, Miss Morton fell naturally to the lot of Monsieur Claude. In this order the party moved towards the drawing-room, Mr. Morton bringing up the

rear. A "highly respectable young man," recommended as such by Mrs. Green, and who, in a black coat, white waistcoat, and well-oiled hair, had, during this polite contention, stood by as apparently indifferent to what was going on as though he were a wooden statue, now started forward and announced the names of the ladies and gentlemen as they entered the drawing-room.

The last-mentioned arrivals had only made their respects to the mistress of the house for the time being, when the highly respectable young man made his appearance, and announced that dinner was served. Mr. Wynum then requested Captain Wilmot to conduct Miss Maunsell to the dining-room, and offered his own services to Mrs. Archibald, whilst Cornet Wynum performed the like duty towards Madame Charleroi. Mr. Archibald took charge of Miss Morton, and the disengaged gentlemen followed as they might.

One word of laudation as to the quality and cooking of the dinner would imply a possibility of error on the part of Gunter, which would be an offence against that great gastronomic authority; one whisper of admiration as to the mode in which the dinner went off would be to hint a doubt of Miss Maunsell's prandium

presidential excellences. To sum up the gastronomic and social excellence of the dinner-party, it is sufficient to say that Gunter catered and Miss Maunsell presided.

When the gentlemen joined the ladies in the drawing-room, which they were not slow to do, the hostess's pleasing cares for the entertainment of her guests received a new impulse. Coffee having been served whilst tables were set, the piano was opened, and the spirit of conversation became more animated.

When we remember that there were four gentlemen in full-dress regimentals in the room, who seemed to vie with each other and with all the civilians present in doing service to Miss Maunsell, it would be difficult to over-estimate the high-toned state of felicity at which she arrived. Yet there were moments when she felt a regret that her duties as mistress of the house sometimes obliged her to forego a delightful *tête-à-tête*, or break a scarcely formed circle where humour and flattery constituted the cementing links.

Miss Keel, who had not been able to come to dinner by reason of her mother's illness, was now seated at the piano, and executing a *morceau* of one of the great classical masters; and her rendering of the composition was so truth-

ful, that Mr. Wynum forgot his duty to Mrs. Archibald, whose partner he was at the whist-table. He revoked repeatedly, took up tricks that did not belong to him, and finally, as if borne away by the music, rose from his chair, and, with the cards still in his hand, wandered towards the piano, and, at a short distance behind the performer, stood, sympathizing with poetic ardour in the lofty ideas of the great Beethoven, and appreciating with scientific knowledge every individual note.

Mrs. Archibald had smilingly followed Mr. Wynum with her eyes.

"How intensely he loves music," she said to Madame Charleroi.

"I don't wonder," was the reply; "it carries me away too."

"Oh! you're musical, then?"

"I studied music at school, and have been accustomed to hear excellent artists."

Mrs. Archibald just then caught the eye of her nephew, and motioned him towards her.

"Richard, we're disabled; Mr. Wynum has been winged away by the music, and our game is suspended."

"Well, music won't wing me away," said the gentleman, taking his seat; "I'll stand to my post."

The whist proceeded. The rubber was concluded about the same time that Miss Keel ceased to play. The musical performance was not only applauded, but Miss Keel enjoyed the satisfaction, so dear to an artist, of knowing that her talent was appreciated. And not alone by Mr. Wynum. Captain Wilmot pronounced such judicious praise as made Miss Keel conclude that he, too, was a musician. He pleaded guilty to knowing something of singing, and asked if she remembered the accompaniment of 'Adelaide.' She remembered, and immediately played the symphony. Then Captain Wilmot sang that wonderful song, and sang it well. Mr. Wynum, who, until then, was not aware of his guest's musical talents, was in raptures.

"But, Wynum," said the captain, "sings very well."

"Does he?" asked his father.

"To be sure he does. We have been practising duets, glees, and quartets, with the help of Rogers and Staunton."

"Then," said Miss Keel, "we're rich in musical talent."

"You've made us feel that," said the captain.

Miss Keel bowed.

“But, Cornet Wynum, you’ll sing something?” she said.

The cornet blushed, and declared he could not venture in the presence of such excellent judges.

“Which is equivalent to saying,” observed his friend the captain, “that I’m no judge, for you never hesitate to sing with me.”

This remark raised a laugh. The cornet, who had taken the precaution to send on some volumes of music belonging to his friend and himself, now turned over the leaves of a duet they were accustomed to sing together. How Mr. Wynum’s nerves thrilled with the strong and new sensation of parental pride as he heard his son’s young, clear, and well-modulated voice take part in the melody, and as he marked the beaming look with which he caught his father’s glance.

“My dear boy, my dear Charlie, you’ve sung it admirably; you’ve a first-rate voice,” cried Mr. Wynum, catching his son’s hand in a burst of delight when the song was concluded. Poor Charlie blushed, and was as deeply touched as though Miss Morton herself had applauded his performance. Miss Keel invited Monsieur Claude to sing, and, rising from the music-stool, observed he did not need her

assistance. That was quite true. Monsieur Claude sang a French ballad, accompanying himself on the piano. Turning over some music, he paused at a duet in which his mother was fond of taking part. Madame Charleroi, accepting the invitation of Mr. Wynum, was led to the piano, and joined her son in the duet, he playing the accompaniment. It was interesting to hear the mother and son sing in their native tongue. It was next found that Monsieur Charleroi, too, could vocalize, and finally it was discovered that nearly every one present was musical, so the whole house resolved itself into a musical committee, and universal harmony prevailed.

But as all the performers did not sing together, nor all touch the piano at the same moment, small groups were formed, resolved and re-combined, where old acquaintances were revived and new ones made. Mrs. Archibald had a long chat with Cornet Wynum, in which she regretted the sad prospect of his going away so soon, but she hoped to have the pleasure of seeing him as frequently as possible before his departure. The young officer made suitable replies, and Mrs. Archibald, who understood the science of society so well, soon formed around her a group to which she

gave the tone, and where each was made to feel pleased with himself and his neighbour. Miss Maunsell was at the same time *tête-à-tête* with Captain Wilmot, who was pouring into her sympathizing ear an account of his eight-year-old daughter.

It was not often Captain Wilmot spoke of his family affairs to strangers, but now, on the eve of leaving for India, old memories and present affections came welling up in his heart, and Miss Maunsell's sympathetic nature, joined to what she did not suspect, her matronly years, beguiled him into an utterance of his hopes and fears. He spoke of his motherless little Fanny, and, softening more and more as he went on, asked permission to bring her to visit Miss Maunsell. The request was quickly granted, and all the pleasure such a visit would afford was dilated on.

These arrangements were scarcely made when Captain Wilmot was summoned to the piano by Cornet Rogers, the entire male strength of the company being called to join in "God save the Queen," the accompaniment being played by Mr. Wynum. This was a *ruse* of the accompanist's, who would have thought himself defrauded did he not take some part in the musical proceedings of the

evening. About midnight supper was announced, and the company sat down to that meal livelier and fresher than they had to dinner. Songs and speeches carried the hilarity of the evening to its highest pitch. Mr. Wynum, expatiating in polished phrase on the accomplishments and virtues of the amiable hostess, proposed her health. Miss Maunsell requested Mr. Archibald to reply on her behalf. This selection was an evidence of the lady's tact, for Mr. Archibald, not being a singer, had not had during the evening an opportunity of signalizing himself. Oratory was his forte, and he now replied to the toast, much to the satisfaction of the lady who had nominated him her representative, as well as to the satisfaction of the company in general and to his own in particular. Mr. Wynum took the cue from Miss Maunsell, and brought Mr. Archibald again and again on his legs, by proposing toasts touching subjects within the young lawyer's special province. Every orator had made his speech, and everybody that could sing had sung, and, after a prolonged sitting at the supper-table, the company returned to the drawing-room, and the National Anthem was again intoned, and Mr. Wynum again played the accompaniment. Finally, the

party broke up, and the guests went their way, pleased with their host and with themselves.

Mrs. Archibald was very much pleased—so much pleased, that she forgot to be fatigued. She told Miss Maunsell at parting that the *réunion* of that evening had brought back in all their freshness the feelings of the olden times. How delighted Miss Maunsell was that her friend was so pleased. But then everybody was pleased. Even the cynical Richard Archibald was pleased, and that, not alone because of his successful oratorical display, but because he had asserted, in the eyes of all present, his right to engross the society of Miss Morton; and this he had done in a refined and gentlemanly manner, without exposing the young lady to remark, at the same time that he made his position be recognized by those whom it concerned, and whom he had especially in view.

Cornet Wynum was pleased with the evening's proceedings, for he was a refined and timid lover, to whom the presence of the beloved was a joy that diffused itself far around,—that impregnated the atmosphere with the soft luxurious sense that reigns on a warm summer day in a richly-stocked garden, when a soft west wind breathes over the flowers,

and carries off and sheds their odours around, without making a leaf to tremble. Cornet Wynum was happy with a sense of happiness like that which arises from the calm enjoyment of the loveliest prospect, under the most genial climatic influences; a sense of happiness made complete by myriad accessories, from the softly-clouded solar luminary down to the little gnat that gives expression to the joy of living in a small drowsy hum. And as this sensuous happiness, though compounded of manifold combinations, might be described in a few short words—"the sunshine of a warm summer day,"—though many closely written pages could not contain an analysis of the component parts, so with Cornet Wynum's felicity, it might be summed up in the words, "The presence of the Beloved"; and yet did the young cornet possess the gift of poesy, which fortunately for himself he did not, he might have defaced some quires of paper in attempting to describe all he felt. At the same time, we are not doing justice to the felicity experienced by the young soldier in seeing Miss Morton, his father's guest, to liken his feelings to any arising from mere sensuous and external agencies. There was all that and something more. There was a sense of happi-

ness that penetrated deep into his being, that permeated his existence, that spiritualized his life, and became thereby more spiritual itself. In short, it was a happiness known only to lovers who love like Cornet Wynum.

Mr. Wynum was pleased with the evening's proceedings, because he had had an opportunity of asserting and maintaining his old character of an accomplished host. He had besides experienced a sentiment, strange coming so late in life—that of parental pride. He was glad to see his son exhibit, in addition to his personal attractions, those accomplishments which so charmingly embellish drawing-room, aye, and fireside life.

Madame Charleroi was pleased because her son and her husband—we are sorry to be obliged to put the husband last in the category—were pleased. She was pleased to see them treated as their personal merits deserved, and she was proud of the admiration their talents elicited.

Captain Wilmot was pleased with the new acquaintances he had made that evening. These were Mrs. Archibald, Miss Maunsell, and Miss Morton. The gentlemen he had all known before.

With Miss Morton Captain Wilmot was

especially pleased, and had contrived to have a great deal of conversation with her. Miss Morton was pleased to meet a gentleman who, though wearing a red coat, was a man of cultivated literary taste and extensive reading. This estimate did not imply a comparison with Cornet Wynum detracting in any way from the latter; but Miss Morton, endowed with a strong and early-matured intellect, found herself on a mental equality with those much her elders. India was a grand theme of common interest between her and Captain Wilmot. She was born there; he had lived there. He knew much more of the literature than either her cousin or brother, and spoke Hindustanee fluently. Whilst Captain Wilmot entertained Miss Morton with accounts of Indian life, Monsieur Claude and Cornet Wynum listened and sometimes questioned, and Richard Archibald occasionally joined in, at times suggesting, at times furnishing a telling anecdote. Richard Archibald was on duty, and felt he ought to be on his guard against such a rival as Captain Wilmot might be. Consequently, he hung about his cousin, and continually offered her that kind of attention and homage that gratify the feelings of a proud and sensitive woman.

Henry Morton was pleased because he pleased

everybody and did not wish to be displeased with any one.

Cornets Rogers and Staunton were pleased. They said so in a confidential communication made to each other on their way home. Rogers finished his panegyric of the evening's entertainment by telling Staunton he had had no idea that Wynum's connexions were such devilish nice people; and Staunton confessed that up to that evening he, too, had been equally ignorant of the fact.

All we have named were pleased on the evening specified, but the entire sum of all these feelings of pleasure, contrasted with Miss Maunsell's, would be as a unit to millions—as a grain of sand to the Himalaya range. She had been the medium through which many had been made happy, and the reflex action of the happiness thus conferred had enlarged Miss Maunsell's capabilities of enjoyments, until she seemed to re-absorb all she bestowed, without at all diminishing what she gave. Who could wonder at Miss Maunsell feeling happy? She sat as mistress at an elegant banquet, and received then and during the evening the attentions due to her position. Was she not the object of the graceful homage of Mr. Wynum? Was she not the recipient of the

tender communications of Captain Wilmot in a confidential *tête-à-tête*? Was she not the evoker of the lively compliments and quick appreciation of the three young *militaires* when they formed the segment of a circle of which she was the centre? To attempt an estimate of Miss Maunsell's feelings would be to essay the impossible, and would entail deserved failure. We can only bow in reverence before what we believe but cannot define.

CHAPTER XVIII.

AFTER a few hours' rest, Mrs. Green rose on the morning succeeding Mr. Wynum's dinner-party. She wished, as she told her niece, to make everything tidy, which was quite true, but which was only in part the motive of her early rising. Mrs. Green wished, if the truth must be told, to make an accurate survey of the remains of the preceding day's feasting, and she desired to estimate what portion of the fragments she might reasonably expect as her share. Mrs. Green had not the slightest intention of unlawfully appropriating anything; but just as heirs-at-law take pleasure in knowing the exact value of the property which must one day be theirs, and how far legacies are likely to detract therefrom, so Mr. Wynum's landlady took a natural interest in ascertaining what amount of spoils remained, as her share would be in proportion to the general mass. Whilst engaged in this very rational and

highly meritorious exercise, Mrs. Green was not a little surprised to hear a step on the stairs, and the next moment Miss Maunsell entered the room, where her landlady was inspecting the supper-table of the previous night. Mrs. Green stared with a look of guilty alarm.

“Lord-a-mercy, ma’am! you up, and it only seven o’clock?”

Miss Maunsell made a signal for silence, and pointed in the direction of Mr. Wynum’s sleeping-room, as she said in a whisper,—

“Green, I’m come to help you to clear away. We must make everything straight before breakfast.”

Accordingly, the glass, china, and plate were removed noiselessly, and quickly carried downstairs; so were the remains of the supper; and Miss Maunsell, immediately setting about washing up the china and glass, desired Green to go up with her niece and put Mr. Wynum’s sitting-room in readiness. Mrs. Green’s old perplexities thronged back on her. After all, was there something impending that she had not divined? Could it be—but that was impossible—but *could* it be that Mr. Wynum was about to efface Miss Maunsell’s name from the maiden list where it had so long stood? Was Miss Morton going to marry the young Cornet

after all? But no, a thousand times no. Clifton had declared such an event impossible. But something was stirring, and what could that something be?

The philosophic-minded Mrs. Green resolved to wait and watch.

Meanwhile, Miss Maunsell made herself so actively busy in the kitchen,—she was a good housekeeper, and pity it was she had not a good house to keep,—that by nine o'clock all the glass and china as well as the plate were in perfect trim and ready to be packed; so that when Green announced that breakfast was ready, Miss Maunsell was quite prepared to enjoy the meal, having, as she observed, earned it. Before leaving the kitchen, she recommended Green to sit down to breakfast at once, the good-natured lady having taken care that when bacon and eggs were being cooked for her repast her landlady should make a like provision for herself and niece. Mrs. Green, with many thanks and much obsequiousness, received these marks of her good-natured lodger's favour. Not that the sagacious mistress of No. 52, St. John's Terrace, would have neglected a salutary care of her own health and of attention to her personal comforts; but she was pleased and soothed by Miss Maunsell's good-

natured cares, and gratified, too, by her presents. So, though Miss Maunsell's appearance in the kitchen was inopportune, it being a principle in Mrs. Green's rule of life that a lady ought never to enter a kitchen, still she comforted herself in the thought that, on the whole, she had rather gained than lost, the lady's attention having been exclusively concentrated on the glass and china to the total exclusion of the eatables.

Miss Maunsell invariably secured the affection of her dependents by her considerate kindness and generosity. Poor Miss Maunsell!—she so sceptical, so thwarting, so sneering, so discomforting when in a secondary position, was generous, considerate, gentle, and bland when put at the head of affairs.

Would that we were all in our proper places!

Amongst Miss Maunsell's many natural gifts was a good constitution, on which she set great value. And she was blessed in being able to command the efficient assistance of a powerful auxiliary in the sustentation of her much-valued constitution, this auxiliary being a good appetite. Miss Maunsell never hurried her meals, she understood the laws of gastronomy too well for that; and she now enjoyed breakfast under the combined influences of a good appe-

tite and the consciousness of having done a good morning's work.

Mr. Wynum rose later than usual by an hour. Not that Mr. Wynum had overslept himself,—on the contrary, he woke earlier than customary, and would have been glad of his breakfast; but the old campaigner knew that in a small establishment the morrow of a feast brings much work for the female hands of the household. And it was part of his policy to ignore such labour. The unwonted movement about the house, the re-arrangement of the furniture in his sitting-room, cautiously as it was done—and in this Mrs. Green was assisted by the highly respectable young man—the whispering voices suppressed to a murmur, and which Mr. Wynum likened to a swarm of bees, ascending and descending the stairs, all these sounds were to him so many signs that what he hoped and expected was being done. At length, all these sounds were hushed, and the stillness that supervenes on completed work prevailed at No. 52, St. John's Terrace.

Feeling assured that order was permanently established amongst the disturbed chairs and tables of the previous day, Mr. Wynum rang his bell, and Mrs. Green set the customary can of hot water on the mat outside his door. In

less than an hour the gentleman entered his sitting-room, and breakfast was served. There was hot curried chicken, there was cold fowl, and two or three kinds of cold meat. Mr. Wynum loved luxurious living, and he loved the pomp and *appareil* attendant thereon as much as he loved the thing itself.

Mr. Wynum read, or seemed to read, his newspaper that morning with great attention. Cornet Wynum arrived about half-past two, as had been agreed on, and at three father and son descended to the first-floor drawing-room to pay their *visite de digestion*. Miss Maunsell sat in state, and looked as though her acquaintance with the things of this world had commenced twenty-five years later than the baptismal register indicated.

Miss Maunsell rose to receive her visitors. To the inquiries of the elder gentleman, who acted as spokesman, she replied that she felt remarkably well. Then there was some talk about the preceding day's doings. Mr. Wynum was lavish in his encomiums on the general arrangements, and the manner in which the thing went off, the entire merit of which was due to the lady who presided. This was too much for Miss Maunsell's nerves or conscience, or both; but Mr. Wynum persisted in saying

what he had already so often said, that but for her the spirit of the feast would have evaporated, and so the lady was obliged to bear as she may this weight of compliment.

All these high-flown words having been pronounced, something was said about more material interests. Mr. Wynum requested Miss Maunsell to direct Green as to the disposal of the remains of the feast, and further begged, if she had no special objection, that the piano might be allowed to remain in her room to the end of the month, "as," said Mr. Wynum, "I think it probable we shall have visitors daily nearly up to that time."

The association implied by the "we" was very pleasing to Miss Maunsell's ears. All Mr. Wynum requested, she promised. These friendly confidences were still going on, when the highly respectable young man, who was still on duty, announced Miss Keel and Monsieur Claude, and with them entered, unannounced, Miss Morton. This last arrival was a delightful surprise, especially to two of the company. Margaret laughingly explained how she had been walking half the length of the street somewhat in the rear of Miss Keel and her escort, and just reached the door, which she found open, as they were being announced. Miss

Morton was the bearer of a message from her aunt, to the effect that she hoped Miss Maunsell was well. Mrs. Archibald, though she had enjoyed herself very much the day before, felt a little fatigued, but would be able to pay a visit the following afternoon. She further hoped to see Miss Maunsell that evening at Eva Terrace. Monsieur Claude brought polite inquiries from his mother. She, too, still felt, though slightly, very slightly, the effects of the last night's dissipation.

Whilst these messages were being delivered, and the proper conventional sympathy expressed, the highly respectable young man appeared bearing a tray laden with fruits and confectionery. The "highly respectable" poured out some glasses of sherry, and Cornet Wynum came to his assistance whilst he uncorked a couple of bottles of champagne. These refreshments being handed round, the conversation became more lively. Captain Wilmot and Monsieur Charleroi arrived. These made a pleasant addition to the company, and their arrival was turned to profit by Mr. Wynum. Disengaging himself from attendance on Miss Maunsell, he gave up his place to Captain Wilmot, and, after a few dexterous manœuvres, contrived to lead Miss Morton to a seat at the

other end of the room, whilst Cornet Wynum busied himself in making Monsieur Charleroi comfortable. Before long Miss Maunsell drew the French gentleman within her own orbit, and the cornet joined his father and Miss Morton. Monsieur Claude, from where he was sitting beside Miss Keel, observed and understood the movement. It would be difficult to say how the young Frenchman felt. It would be too much to say he felt jealous: he sighed and felt sad.

Captain Wilmot did not forget to find his way to where Miss Keel was sitting. The songs and music of the past evening were talked of, and Monsieur Claude opened the piano. The sound of music once awakened, the groups were soon broken up and reconstructed; Miss Keel again enjoyed the pleasure of being appreciated by such accurate judges as Mr. Wynum and Captain Wilmot.

There was much singing and much conversation; so much of both, that when Captain Wilmot, fixing his eyes on the *pendule*, said he must leave, everybody was surprised to discover it was half-past five. All prepared to depart.

“Stay a moment, dear,” said Miss Maunsell to Margaret Morton; “I’ve a word to say to

you." The others having retired, she added, "You dine with me, dear."

"I would with pleasure, Miss Maunsell, but —aunt—"

"I've arranged all that, dear. I sent a message by Clifton, who was here a while ago, to say you'd dine with me, and I'd take you home afterwards."

That affair was quietly settled. Mr. Wynum and his son also dined with Miss Maunsell. All this was the result of private arrangements between Miss Maunsell and Mr. Wynum; but so many private arrangements had lately been and were still being made between that lady and gentleman, that even the serpentine Green found her sagacity at fault. "What could it mean? What did it mean?"

Cornet Wynum asked neither himself nor anyone else what anything meant. His happiness was complete—too full for doubt, too exquisite for examination. Miss Morton was sitting opposite him at dinner, and all was so home-like. If into a heart so full as the young cornet's a wish could glide, it would be that he might remain for ever as he was. And his father was so charming, so delightful!—he made Miss Morton so much at home!

And Margaret was gay; gay with the

vivacity of youth and the frankness of a noble nature; gay, too, with the generosity of a good heart, that responds promptly to kindness. She saw those around wishing to make her happy, and the bare exhibition of such a feeling achieved the contemplated end. Mr. Wynum possessed in perfection the art of drawing people out, and Miss Morton, so sedate at her aunt's *réunions*, grave sometimes even to taciturnity, was now bright in repartee, as Mr. Wynum with skilful hand elicited the latent spark from a well-charged mind.

And was Miss Maunsell overlooked all this time? By no means. Mr. Wynum, whilst working Miss Morton's mind into the highest state of intellectual enjoyment, that of reciprocating thought, managed so that Miss Maunsell had, or believed she had, a large share in what was going forward. Many a well-baited trap was laid to catch the kind old lady's stereotyped French and Italian quotations, and many a well-turned compliment did the musty sentence elicit. And then Miss Maunsell, at the head of affairs, was so different to the same lady in a subordinate position!

The only one who contributed nothing to the hilarity of the meeting was Cornet Wynum. Like all young persons profoundly in love, and

for the first time, he was meditative, or rather silent, without meditating or even thinking. His mind was too full for active thought, though crowded with the loftiest, sweetest, and most entrancing ideas.

Miss Maunsell declared more than once that Cornet Wynum was making no dinner; and then the gentleman, thus brought into notice, declared he had made a prolonged lunch—one that had lasted to dinner-time.

Dinner came to an end, and dessert was put on the table. Mrs. Green relieved her mind by telling her highly respectable masculine acquaintance, who was then drinking tea in the kitchen, that for her part she had believed the company would have sat till midnight. However, Mrs. Green was disappointed, and so was Cornet Wynum. Four hours and a half before midnight the *séance* came to an end, Miss Maunsell remarking she feared Mrs. Archibald would be expecting them. The ladies retired to put on their bonnets, and Cornet Wynum, taking hold of his father's hands, said,—

“Oh, father, you know how to make every one happy.”

“My dear boy,” said the father, shaking his hands cordially.

The father and son had a short conversation.

It was close on eight o'clock when these four persons left St. John's Terrace. Mr. Wynum gave his arm to Miss Maunsell; Cornet Wynum did the same by Miss Morton. Who can tell what the young soldier felt when, for the first time, the hand of his first love sought support on his arm? You can tell it, sir, and so, no doubt, can the gentleman that stands smiling beside you; so mayhap can we; but Cornet Wynum, at the moment to which we allude, might have conscientiously declared that all the paper ever manufactured, whether of rags, straw, or other refuse, would not have sufficed to hold, nor all the pens ever made, whether of goose-quill or steel, sufficed to record the millionth part of the sensations which just then tingled through his frame from brain to toe.

The little party had reached Eva Terrace, passed through the front garden, ascended the flight of steps, and waited till the door was opened; then Cornet Wynum commenced to wish the ladies good-night.

"What!" said Miss Morton, "aren't you coming in?"

"Good gracious!" exclaimed Miss Maunsell, "I never doubted of your coming in with us."

“Pray excuse me,” said the young man, in a hesitating tone.

“Professional duties, Miss Maunsell,” interposed his father, “oblige the cornet to leave us for the present. Good-night, Charlie. Take a cab. You’ll be late.”

Charlie said “Good-night” to all, repassed the gate, and turned his steps towards Piccadilly. He did not take a cab; walking suited his mood better. Having reached his hotel, he went direct to his sitting-room, and then threw himself at full length on a sofa. One hour after midnight tolled before he retired to his bed-room.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE dinner-party presided over by Miss Maunsell on behalf of Mr. Wynum was to that lady a feast with an octave. Every day during the succeeding week were visitors in her drawing-room from three to nearly six o'clock. The visitors were few, but constant. They did not come and go; they came and stayed. Their stay was principally owing to the attractions offered, and to Miss Maunsell's friendly recommendation that during the few remaining days allotted to them in this world—this cheering remark was addressed to the military gentlemen—they would be as much as possible with their friends. Cornets Rogers and Staunton frankly accepted the invitation, and with light-hearted laughter said they intended to be as merry as possible before being shot.

On the morrow of the dinner Cornets Rogers and Staunton did not visit Miss Maunsell; pro-

fessional duties kept them away. On the succeeding day they appeared, but Captain Wilmot and Cornet Wynum did not. Their military friends knew nothing about them, and seemed in nowise to regret their absence. It was on this day Mrs. Archibald, Madame and Monsieur Charleroi, made their visit. Mr. Wynum, as a matter of course, was present, and made himself, as Miss Maunsell said, "infinitely agreeable."

"Is he not always so?" said Mrs. Archibald, to whom the remark was made.

"Yes, dear, certainly; but I think more so now than ever."

"An excess for which you may thank yourself, Ellen."

"Now, dear, how can you talk such nonsense?"

"I've doubts as to its being nonsense."

"How can you, dear; how can you?"

As Mrs. Archibald and Madame Charleroi were preparing to leave, Miss Morton came forward to join her aunt.

"Well, dear," said Miss Maunsell, laying her hand affectionately on Margaret's shoulder, "I hope you've had a hearty laugh this afternoon." And her glance took in the two officers.

"I certainly have," said Margaret, her eyes bright with the spirit of fun.

"Rogers and I," said Cornet Staunton, "have been communicating to Miss Morton the particulars of our last wills and testaments, and the legacies we intend to leave our friends; and she has thought proper to make these solemn documents a subject of laughter."

"Oh, harebrains, harebrains!" said Miss Maunsell, laughing too, and shaking her finger in mimic threat at the speaker.

The military gentlemen made their adieus. Miss Maunsell turned to Miss Morton.

"Now, Margaret dear, you'll dine with me to-day, and I'll take you home in the evening."

"My dear Miss Maunsell, I dined with you yesterday."

"No reason, dear, why you shouldn't dine with me to-day."

Mrs. Archibald looked very much pleased. Miss Maunsell was not always so demonstrative in her kindness to her niece.

"Really, Ellen, you seem inclined to run away with Margaret altogether."

"No danger, dear, that any one will ever desert you for me. Besides, your nephews are with you."

Miss Morton read consent in her aunt's eyes.

"Well, Miss Maunsell, I shall be very much pleased indeed. I shall just accompany aunt home, and return."

"May I have the honour of accompanying the ladies, and re-conducting Miss Morton?" asked Mr. Wynum.

Mrs. Archibald bowed assent, and, having said farewell, the visitors left, Madame Char-roi leaning on her husband, and Mrs. Archibald on Mr. Wynum. Miss Morton walked beside her aunt.

A suspicion, near akin to a wish, floated through Miss Morton's mind as she returned with Mr. Wynum to St. John's Terrace. To whichever class the thought belonged, it was realized. Cornet Wynum had arrived. Dinner was served, as on the previous day, in Miss Maunsell's sitting-room, and the four that sat down to table were as happy in each other's society as they had been twenty-four hours previously. Miss Maunsell rose to retire after dessert. Mr. Wynum entreated. Miss Maunsell pleaded the rights of cigars.

"Ah, Miss Maunsell," said Mr. Wynum, in a tone of sadness, "this is a sentence of banishment. 'Tis we gentlemen who ought

to retire. We couldn't think of smoking in a lady's drawing-room."

"My dear sir," said the lady, with a drollish twinkle in her eyes, "this end is the dining-room, the other the drawing-room."

"Even so," Mr. Wynum spoke very gravely, "the odour of a cigar would be an offence."

"On the contrary, I like it. I quite enjoy the odour of a cigar."

"That, Miss Maunsell, alters the case"; and Mr. Wynum resumed his seat.

It is not within the capacity of our poor goose-quill to describe how the thing occurred, but six minutes after the discussion just described Miss Maunsell and Mr. Wynum were seated at the table, on which the dessert still stood; a plate with fruit was before the lady, and beside the plate a glass of excellent port. The gentleman was gently whiffing his cigar, and at intervals sipping his wine. In the other section of the apartment Miss Morton was seated on a couch, and Cornet Wynum on a chair close beside her.

It was half-past eight when a party of four reached Eva Terrace that evening. Three entered; the fourth, a gentleman wearing a military cloak, retired.

Mrs. Archibald had, on the occasion of the

dinner-party, expressed to Cornet Wynum a hope that she should see him more frequently before his departure for India than she had lately done. The young soldier had made a suitable reply; but up to the point at which our history has now arrived Cornet Wynum had not resumed his visits at Eva Terrace. Mrs. Archibald now made inquiries of his father, and was informed that professional duties so engrossed his son's time that none remained for visiting, but that the coming week would give him more leisure.

Two days had elapsed since Thursday—the Thursday—and on each of these days Miss Morton had dined with Miss Maunsell. So had Mr. Wynum and his son. Sunday arrived, and Miss Morton, returning from church, felt it would be only polite to call on her aunt's old friend. It would seem as though she was expected, for before Mrs. Green or her niece could reach the house-door, it was opened to Miss Morton by Cornet Wynum. The intercourse of the last few days had given a tone of intimacy to the acquaintance of these two young people that it had never before attained, not even when Cornet Wynum made unquestioned his daily morning calls at Eva Terrace. There was a frank and honest familiarity in

Miss Morton's greeting to the young cornet that put him quite at his ease, whilst it infused into his heart a sense of profound happiness.

"Good morning, Margaret, my dear," said Miss Maunsell, rising from the sofa where she and Mr. Wynum were seated. Miss Maunsell kissed her young friend: she was become very demonstrative in her affection for this young friend. She asked after Miss Keel: Margaret had seen her at church.

"I think she'll call here on her return," said Miss Maunsell; "and possibly Monsieur Claude too."

"Miss Maunsell," said Mr. Wynum, bowing gracefully to that lady, "is the centre of universal attraction."

Miss Maunsell bowed in return, and declared the compliment was more than she deserved. "But," she added, "I thought whilst the piano remained here these young people might like a little music. They can sing their hymns to-day."

"Miss Maunsell," said her flatterer, "is always so considerate."

"Well, really we oughtn't to live for ourselves alone," was the quiet reply.

Miss Maunsell really believed that the idea of engaging Miss Keel and Monsieur Claude

to call at St. John's Terrace originated with herself. Poor Miss Maunsell! She was the unconscious cat's-paw of an intellect much higher than her own. The very terms she used were the unreflecting repetition of words adroitly insinuated into her ear by the diplomatic Mr. Wynum.

The servant announced Miss Keel, Madame and Monsieur Charleroi, and Monsieur Claude.

Miss Keel would have been earlier, but, having made an appointment with Monsieur Claude, had waited his coming. "The services in his church were longer than in hers," she remarked.

Madame Charleroi, having learned that Miss Maunsell was having a concert of sacred music, had ventured to intrude and bring her husband.

Miss Maunsell was much pleased to find she had brought the sensitive French lady to terms of such easy familiarity.

Miss Keel took her place at the piano; the sacred music commenced. Miss Keel's voice was of small compass, but so excellent a musician knew how to make the most of her vocal capabilities. She sang an English hymn very charmingly. Monsieur Claude was invited to try something. He took from the music-waggon a volume of his which had remained

there since the evening of the great dinner, and, turning over the leaves, paused at "*Dies Iræ*," and asked Miss Keel to play the accompaniment.

"You know this?" said Monsieur Claude, looking at Mr. Wynum.

"Oh, yes. Try the first verse, and I'll join in."

Monsieur Claude, trained from childhood to the singing of church music, sang the first verse of the hymn; then, turning towards the other end of the room, beckoned his father, who immediately came forward. So did Cornet Wynum. The accompaniment was again played. Each gentleman tried in a preliminary way the part he was to take. Mr. Wynum, when on the Continent, drawn by his profound appreciation of the spirit of religious music, was in the habit of attending the Catholic services. So was his son. The French gentlemen were to the manner born. Monsieur Claude again sang,—

" *Dies iræ, dies illa*
Solvat seculum in favilla
Teste David, cum Sybilla."

Then the others, joining in chorus, repeated the lines, after which all went through in parts that wonderful word-picture of the final judg-

ment of mankind; the terror excited by the arrival of the Judge,—

“Quantus tremor est futurus,
Quando Judex est venturus,
Cuncta stricte discussurus!”

The mighty trumpet sends its summons through the kingdom of the grave, calling all into the judicial presence:—

“Tuba mirum spargens sonum
Per sepulchra regionum
Coget omnes ante thronum.”

Death and Nature are both astounded, seeing creatures that had surrendered to their grasp rise in answer to the judicial summons:—

“Mors stupebit et natura
Cum resurget creatura
Judicanti responsura.”

Then the written book is opened which contains the matter on which the world is to be judged:—

“Liber scriptus proferetur,
In quo totum continetur,
Unde mundus judicatur.”

The Judge takes His seat: all that was hidden is brought to view, nothing remains concealed:—

“Judex ergo, cum sedebit,
Quinquid latet apparebit,
Nil inultum remanebit.”

This graphic description of the "last day," which owes so much of its power to the terse perspicacity of the Latin tongue, was well rendered by the four trained male voices that undertook the execution on that occasion. Miss Keel warmly complimented Monsieur Claude on his performance, and almost reproached him for not having allowed her to hear that great poem before. He smiled, and said his mother could take part in the "Stabat Mater." The mention of this hymn, so much more generally known, because of Rossini's music, than is the "Dies Iræ," was received with delight. Mr. Wynum offered his arm to Madame Charleroi, and conducted her to the piano, Miss Keel took her place at the instrument, the parts were arranged, and after a few essays, stops, and recommencements, a final beginning was made, and all went smoothly on. What a painfully truthful portrait does the writer make of the most sorrowful mother that ever lived whilst enduring that terrible agony! The grief-laden mother stands weeping beside the cross on which her Son is hanging! What a picture of grief and woman's courage, a mother *standing* beside the gibbet on which is fastened her dying Son! If maternal love is the strongest and most dis-

interested of human affections, its counterpoise can only be found in a mother's grief. If the worst son never so far loses a hold on his mother's affections as that she can remain insensible whilst seeing him suffer either physically or mentally, what must have been the grief of her who adored her Son as her Creator, whilst she loved Him as her child?

If Madame Charleroi, her husband and son, did not give the "Stabat Mater" with all the ornamental flourishes in which professional singers delight, they rendered it with the tender pathos of hearts that sympathized with the subject. They were in spirit present at the Great Execution, and mourned with the sword-pierced heart of the woful mother.

Mr. Wynum was quite carried away by the sentiments as well as by the singing of the piece. He forgot for the time the self-appointed *rôle* he had been playing for the past week. He forgot even Miss Maunsell, and, when the singing ceased, he raised Madame Charleroi's hand to his lips. Mr. Wynum would not have given an Englishwoman such a salute, but it was a Continental courtesy, and was well received by the French lady.

The visitors were leaving.

"'Tis painful to part so soon," said Mr. Wynum, with the ease and gallantry of a well-bred elderly gentleman.

"If I may venture to give an impromptu invitation," said Madame Charleroi, "I would ask you to do me the favour of coming to my house this evening. We could continue our sacred music without breaking your English Sabbath," she added, with a smile.

The invitation was instantly accepted by all, excepting Miss Morton.

"I should be most happy, Madame Charleroi, to accept your invitation, but aunt would be quite alone, and she is not very well."

"I saw your brother pass within the last ten minutes," said Cornet Wynum, quickly. "He was going towards Eva Terrace."

"Oh! then my cousin will not dine with us, so aunt would be nearly quite alone."

"I regret," said Madame Charleroi, somewhat stiffly, "that I cannot reckon on the pleasure of Miss Morton's company. I also regret to hear that Mrs. Archibald is not well."

"No," said Margaret, who understood Madame's feelings, "aunt is never very strong, but she is at present unusually languid. But for that, madame, you would have had a visit from her within the last few days."

Madame Charleroi made a French curtsy, and took leave, with "*Au revoir*" to those she expected to see in the evening.

"Really, Margaret, my dear," said Miss Maunsell, "I think you might have accepted Madame Charleroi's invitation."

"Oh, Miss Maunsell, how could I leave aunt alone? And I have not dined at home for the last three days."

"Well, at all events, dear, you'll dine with me to-day. Miss Keel has promised, and we'll see you home in the evening."

"Dear Miss Maunsell, excuse me. I mustn't. Aunt would be alone."

"I saw your brother going up," said Cornet Wynum, repeating the information he had already given.

"That proves my cousin won't be there, so I shall be doubly needed—at least, so I flatter myself."

Cornet Wynum experienced a certain satisfaction in hearing Miss Morton speak so coolly of her cousin; but Miss Maunsell, who could ill bear contradication on any subject, was beginning to show on her face a change of temper of which Mr. Wynum took instant note.

"Much as Miss Maunsell," he said, bowing

courteously to that lady, "will regret your absence, Miss Morton, nobody can better appreciate the motives of your refusal."

These words gave Margaret confidence. A moment before she had feared Miss Maunsell's displeasure.

"Dear Miss Maunsell," she said, gaily, "only think. Poor aunt shan't see you this evening, nor Mr. Wynum, nor Cornet Wynum," and she laughed. "But I must really go now."

"Allow me to have the honour of conducting you home, Miss Morton," said Mr. Wynum.

The cornet ran upstairs to fetch his father's hat. Miss Maunsell, smiling roguishly, shook her finger at Margaret, and said,—

"Naughty girl, naughty girl!"

"Dear Miss Maunsell, think of poor aunt. She really is not well."

"My dear, your aunt is as well as she has been for the last twelve years."

Miss Maunsell would not allow any one to sympathize with Mrs. Archibald's delicate health, or make any assertion on the subject, except where she took the lead herself.

"Though Miss Morton is obliged to return to her aunt to-day," said Mr. Wynum, "and neither you nor I, Miss Maunsell, can wonder

at her anxiety, still, as you suggested, Miss Morton may give you the pleasure of her company at dinner to-morrow, and we can all, in the evening, pay our respects to Mrs. Archibald."

Miss Maunsell had made no such suggestion, nor had the idea occurred to her; but Mr. Wynum's fluent flattery stole softly, like a pleasing truth, into her mind, allayed the accelerated circulation of her blood, and stilled the too hasty beats of her heart.

"Then you will dine with me to-morrow, dear?"

"With pleasure, Miss Maunsell, provided aunt is better."

"Oh, naughty! naughty!"

Cornet Wynum had been standing nearly two minutes within the doorway, his father's hat in hand. He was quite at a loss to understand under what possible condition of things Miss Morton could be apostrophized as naughty.

Miss Morton left, escorted by Mr. Wynum. Miss Maunsell, Miss Keel, and Cornet Wynum stood at the window as they passed. Miss Maunsell shook her finger in playful threatening at Margaret, who smiled and nodded in return. Mr. Wynum raised his hat.

"I'm almost sorry, Margaret," said Mrs.

Archibald, as she sat at dinner with her niece and nephew, "you didn't accept Ellen's invitation."

"Dear aunt, I couldn't leave you alone."

"Am I nobody?" asked her brother.

Mrs. Archibald smiled at her nephew's waggery; so did his sister.

"You're very good, Margaret," said her aunt; "but Ellen is so easily offended."

"This is a new fit," said Mr. Morton. "A shrewd, commercial man like me suspects something at the bottom of so many invitations to dinner."

"But poor Ellen is not commercial, and I'm glad to see her show so much affection for Margaret."

"My dear aunt, that's the suspicious part. Your friend Ellen is not usually so fond of Margaret. If 'twere Dick or I she invited, I could understand it. These elderly unmarried ladies are generally very indulgent to young men."

"Oh, Harry! Harry!" interrupted his aunt; "I'm ashamed of you."

"Well, aunt, there's something in the wind; of that I'm sure. Do you think a match is likely to come off between Ellen and Mr. Wynum?"

"I really cannot say"; and Mrs. Archibald looked grave.

"Possible, aunt, not probable; else why should she introduce rival ladies? Meg or Miss Keel might carry off the old gentleman."

Meg laughed heartily.

"Really, Harry, this is too bad; I must silence you." Still Mrs. Archibald was smiling.

"But aunt, I was only talking of possibilities. I may be mistaken."

"Indeed, I think you are, Harry."

"Perhaps, instead of looking on Meg and Miss Keel as rivals, Miss Maunsell invites 'em to matronize her courtship or innocent flirtation, as the case may be."

"Oh!" said Mrs. Archibald, gently, lifting her hands and eyes. "If Ellen heard this, what would become of us?"

"But where's Richard?" asked Margaret.

"He dines to-day with old Grant."

"And why not you?"

"I'm not wanted. I'm glad to be out of it. I leave all the law part of the business to Dick. He arranges the securities and all that sort of thing. I look after the commercial part, making the investments, and so forth."

"Does Mr. Grant do business on Sunday?"

"No: that is—not exactly. He talks

matters over. The fact is, Grant is one of those men that never eat a regular dinner, except on Sunday. During the week he takes a hasty meal—a chop, or something of that kind—in some eating-house in the City. He remains at home all day Sunday, and perhaps sees some special friend that has a large transaction on hand.”

“What a strange life!” observed Mrs. Archibald.

“Does Mr. Grant sell anything?” asked Margaret.

“Yes: he sells money.”

“At how much a pound?”

“At a hundred shillings, or a hundred pounds, whichever he can get.”

CHAPTER XX.

ON the following morning a note was presented to Mrs. Archibald. It was from Miss Maunsell, and contained many tender inquiries about her "dear friend's health." It also contained an invitation to dinner for Miss Morton, "the dear child," as Miss Maunsell was pleased to call her, having refused to stay on the previous day, because of her anxiety about her aunt. The note went on further to say that, as the piano was destined to remain some few days longer, she should like to hear an occasional tune, and poor dear Miss Keel had promised to dine with her again that day. All would present themselves before Mrs. Archibald in the evening.

"Well, Margaret, poor dear Ellen is constant in her affections. You're invited to dine with her again to-day. You go at four."

"I'm much flattered. But isn't four early?"

"Perhaps the Charlerois will be there as

well as Miss Keel. I don't mean to dinner, but to visit the piano."

"It may be, aunt. Madame Charleroi sings charmingly."

"I've heard her. She sings very prettily indeed."

"You heard her sing French ballads; but you should hear her in the Latin hymns, as she sang 'em yesterday."

"She's certainly a lady-like woman of nice accomplishments; and that reminds me, Margaret, of our arrangement to visit her to-day."

"I shall be glad, aunt. She's a little jealous, I think."

"Possibly. It requires some tact to manage one's acquaintance."

Having uttered which sentiment, Mrs. Archibald lay back in her easy-chair and took up the *Morning Post*. Though living so retired, she still took a languid interest in fashionable news.

"Aunt," said Margaret, laying down a magazine she had been reading, "I propose that immediately after lunch we take a drive. The day is fine, and you haven't been out for a week. On our return we can call on Madame Charleroi; afterwards I can go on to Miss Maunsell's."

"Very well, my dear. The arrangement is excellent."

The visit to the French lady was duly paid, and a few minutes before four Mrs. Archibald's carriage drew up before Miss Maunsell's abode. The warm-hearted lady ran to the door, opened it, descended the steps, and was standing beside the vehicle by the time Mrs. Green had ascended from the basement apartments, and was about to officiate as janitor.

"Won't you come in, dear, for a moment?"

"No, thank you. I'm already fatigued."

"Well, I shan't press you. This naughty girl and I will see you again early in the evening. She wouldn't stay with me yesterday."

"Dear Miss Maunsell—" began Margaret.

"I know, dear, I know. I forgive you."

And having returned Mrs. Archibald's nods and smiles, Miss Maunsell and her guest retired into the house.

All was silence there. Miss Morton had taken off her bonnet, and was sitting on a couch beside Miss Maunsell, when footsteps were heard on the stairs; they drew nearer, a knock at the door, and Mr. Wynum entered immediately, followed by his son. Each of the little party was happy to see the other, and

all were happy together. In the midst of these greetings, Miss Maunsell began to express her astonishment at the non-arrival of Miss Keel. It was scarcely the right thing: she had made an appointment for four o'clock, and it was now nearly half-past. It was all very well for Mr. Wynum to say perhaps she was delayed by business, but her classes were finished before four, and of course they couldn't delay her. As to her mother's being ill, it wasn't likely she'd fall ill all of a sudden,—she was always ailing; and then Mrs. Keel had a servant, the faithful Martha, that was more like a daughter than a servant; and Miss Maunsell finished by declaring she could *not* understand it. .

The offuscation of Miss Maunsell's understanding was suddenly dispelled by a knock at the street door, which knock was the forerunner of Miss Keel's appearance before the expecting dinner-party. Before the new arrival had time to salute the lady of the house, she was informed by that very energetic personage she had not known what to think, she had just begun to suspect something terrible had happened; Miss Keel might have sent down to say she was delayed, and not thrown them all into that terrible state of anxiety.

Miss Keel meekly explained. Her watch was twenty minutes slow; she was not aware of it, and at four o'clock began to make preparations for leaving her mother for the evening.

“Ah, you poor dear creature,” cried out Miss Maunsell, as she flung her arms round Miss Keel's neck and kissed her; “that's so like you. Twenty minutes slow. Like mistress, like watch.”

And Miss Maunsell laughed with a keen appreciation of Miss Keel's peculiarities. But Margaret Morton, who loved Miss Keel, to whom she felt she was indebted for much that she knew, and to whom she might have been indebted for much more, had she been endowed with great musical capabilities, kissed Miss Keel with a graceful softness, the offspring of fond compassion, and offered to accompany her whilst she took off her bonnet. The operation was quickly performed. On their way back the two ladies saw Miss Maunsell ascending by the flight of stairs that led from the culinary department. Affecting not to perceive her, Margaret pressed Miss Keel's hand, and hurried her to the sitting-room, which, with the folding-doors flung open, was made to serve the combined purposes of dining and drawing room.

Miss Maunsell followed in less than a minute, her colour slightly heightened, and her face irradiated by a triumphant smile.

“I’ve taken the liberty,” she said, “of altering the dinner hour, without consulting my guests. I thought that by dining at five, or a little before, we should have more time for our musical exercises before going to Eva Terrace.”

“Miss Maunsell’s arrangements,” said Mr. Wynum, “are, as ever, excellent.”

“Oh, sir!” returned the lady, dropping her large eyes and capacious eyelids, “you’re too flattering.” Miss Maunsell firmly believed she exercised her faculty of free will in changing the dinner hour.

Had an Asmodeus given a client of his “a bird’s-eye view” of Miss Maunsell’s dining-room at half-past six on that evening, the person so favoured would have beheld a very pleasant grouping of the occupants of the apartment. At one end were Miss Maunsell and Mr. Wynum, one seated on either side of the table, on which large remains of an abundant dessert still stood. Miss Maunsell was slowly detaching grapes from a bunch that lay on her plate, and, at intervals, after two or three of the vinous globules had found their way beyond

her lips, she sipped daintily, and, with the air of a connoisseur, a little of the prime old port whose ruby beads hung temptingly on the sides of her wine-glass. Opposite sat Mr. Wynum, whiffing slowly a very delicate cigar, and emptying ever and anon a glass of the good port that his fair *vis-à-vis* favoured in her way.

“Miss Maunsell, I’m afraid you don’t like this wine!”

“On the contrary, I find it excellent.”

“You don’t drink it.”

“Excuse me; I’m doing it justice.” And Miss Maunsell raised her glass so as to bring it in a line between Mr. Wynum’s eye and hers.

“I know you’re a judge of wine, Miss Maunsell.”

“Unfortunately, I am. My dear father and uncle kept a well-stocked cellar of the best wines. I always hesitate to take a glass of wine in a house where I’m not sure the master knows what good wine is. And so few persons do really understand good wine!”

“Come, Miss Maunsell, you needn’t be afraid of this port. There’s no acidity here. It has body, but ’tis old,—older than you, Miss Maunsell. This wine is at the least fifty years old.”

“I’ve no doubt, sir; no doubt.”

“Then, Miss Maunsell, allow me to fill your glass.”

“Really, sir.” And a white hand was spread like an ægis over the glass.

“Miss Maunsell, a baby may drink half a bottle of this; ’tis mild as milk. No, no, you must finish your glass before I fill it.”

The lady allowed herself to be persuaded.

“I am afraid, Miss Maunsell, ’tis my cigar prevents you enjoying your dessert. I’ll throw it away.”

“I beg you’ll not. I like the odour of a cigar,—I do, indeed; and you must remember I requested you to smoke.”

“Miss Maunsell, I feel as though I were taking advantage of your kindness. ’Tis really too bad.” And Mr. Wynum, as if by a heroic effort, flung away what remained of his cigar, and which measured, perhaps, the eighth of an inch. He then filled his glass, and pulled his chair a little with one hand, as if to say, “Come, let us be quite at home”; and he looked straight at his opposite neighbour.

“Well, this is really pleasant. So comfortable; so like home. These *petits diners* make one feel quite a different being. And all the result of your good management and kindness, Miss Maunsell.”

“ Really, sir, really, you give me too much praise.” And the full blue eyes were lowered beneath the large but scantily-fringed lids, the head was gently bent forward, with a slight, deprecatory shake, and Miss Maunsell looked the impersonation of self-accusing modesty.

Here were two people conjointly happy, and from different causes. Mr. Wynum was happy because he was carrying his point, microscopic though it was, and the prospect of his final triumph afforded a gentle, and, for him, sufficiently stimulating, exercise of the social talents, on whose possession he prided himself.

Miss Maunsell was happy by reason of emotions, sensations, and hopes, a record of which would cover more paper than our stationer is in a position to supply us with.

At the other end of the apartment, that is at the opposite side of the folding-doors, there were three happy people. Two were seated on a couch, one at the piano. Of the two sitting on a couch, one was a young man in regimentals. He was happy with an old-fashioned happiness, dating from the time when Adam first saw Eve in paradise. Cornet Wynum—he was the young man—could not tell why he was happy, but he was under a general impression that Miss Morton’s conversation embodied

wisdom and wit, compared with which the chats and discussions of King Solomon and the Queen of Sheba were full of dull platitudes.

Miss Keel was happy at the piano, giving utterance to the thoughts of others, and sometimes to her own, and, obedient to acoustic laws, making the air harmonious with sweet sounds.

Miss Morton discovered it was nigh to eight o'clock. It is much to snatch one hour and half of unalloyed happiness in this world of contradictions, and yet Cornet Wynum was almost angry when Miss Morton went to inform Miss Maunsell of the hour. That good lady expressed an astonishment which proved how agreeably time must have passed for her. She immediately rose from her seat, and, having spoken a few words of explanation to Mr. Wynum, filled his glass, locked the decanters into the chiffonier, rang the bell, and, on Mrs. Green's appearance, told her to remove the dessert. She then hurried away to put on her bonnet and shawl.

Meanwhile, Miss Keel had taken no heed of the commotion passing around her. Becharmed by the sounds she had herself awakened, she sat still discoursing music, still drawing poetry from the ivory keys, until Margaret Morton,

putting her arm round her neck, said softly, "We're going," and placed her bonnet on her head, and unfolded her shawl.

"I couldn't find your gloves," said Margaret.

"Dear me—dear me! weren't they with my bonnet and shawl?"

"No, I looked everywhere about."

"Dear me, I thought I left 'em with my bonnet. I had better go and look myself."

"Try your pocket first."

Miss Keel tried her pocket, and pulled out the gloves. She looked at Margaret as she did so with a pleading self-condemnatory smile, that seemed to say, "You see what a simpleton I am." Margaret laughed, arranged Miss Keel's shawl, pinned it, picked up her handkerchief, which, unawares, she had pulled out of her pocket with the gloves, and then looking round to see her friend had not forgotten anything else, said, "Now we're ready."

Miss Maunsell discovered they were rather late, and hastened towards the house door. Mr. Wynum followed, leading Miss Keel by the hand. Having joined Miss Maunsell, he offered an arm to each lady, and proceeded through the little garden into the high road, Cornet Wynum following with Miss Morton.

When the little party reached Eva Terrace,

four entered, and found Mrs. Archibald alone. Her nephews, whom she expected to dinner, had sent an apology. They were detained in the City. Margaret Morton felt an acute self-reproach. She regretted having dined with Miss Maunsell, and she told herself in thought that, whilst her vanity had been enjoying a triumph, her aunt had been sitting alone. Meanwhile, Mrs. Archibald talked with her guests. She asked after Cornet Wynum, and learned from his father that arrangements connected with his approaching departure engrossed much of his time, but that during the few days immediately preceding the embarkation of the regiment he would be free, and would then pay his respects in person to his friends. Mr. Wynum seemed anxious to get rid of the subject.

“And this reminds me,” he said, “I’ve learned from my son that Miss Maunsell is threatened with a military invasion to-morrow.”

“Dear me, sir!” exclaimed the lady alluded to, putting on a look of playful surprise, “what does that mean?”

“Nothing less, Miss Maunsell, and I ought perhaps to say nothing more, than that certain military gentlemen intend to pay you a morning visit.”

"Really, Ellen," said Mrs. Archibald, "you're becoming quite dissipated. I must begin to look after you."

"I wish you would, dear; do come in to-morrow afternoon."

"My presence may not be welcome to your visitors."

"Now, dear, how can you! how can you!"

"Miss Maunsell's *matinées musicales* have begun to be talked of," observed Mr. Wynum.

"In that case," said Miss Maunsell, with a piquant smile, "Miss Keel must be the attraction."

"Oh dear no!" said Miss Keel, simply, "I never was an attraction to any one."

Mrs. Archibald smiled.

"You poor, dear creature," said Miss Maunsell; "why do you always undervalue yourself?"

"I speak the truth indeed, Miss Maunsell."

"We should hear Captain Wilmot's opinion on that point," observed Mr. Wynum.

"On my music, perhaps," said the simple-minded artist; "but 'tis Margaret he admires"—and she looked with a fond smile at her former pupil; "he told me so himself."

Mrs. Archibald looked grave for a second. Miss Morton seemed to take no heed of what was said, for at the moment she stooped to pick

up a card that had fallen from the pack she held in her hand. Miss Maunsell coloured violently.

“My dear,” she said, turning sharply to Miss Keel, “I wonder you haven’t more sense than to speak so before any grown girl, particularly a pupil of your own!”

“I don’t see any harm in it,” said Miss Keel, in her customary quiet tone; “’tis the truth.”

“Ellen,” interposed Mrs. Archibald, “we seem to have forgotten our rubber. Margaret will throw for partners.”

Margaret did so. The two black knaves fell to Mrs. Archibald and Mr. Wynum; consequently Miss Keel and Miss Maunsell were doomed to be partners. In the face of Miss Maunsell’s remark about growing girls, Mr. Wynum did not dare offer his place to Margaret.

“I’m such a bad player,” said Miss Keel quietly; “Margaret plays much better than I.”

“Oh, Miss Keel!” said Mrs. Archibald, “you play very nicely.”

“Miss Maunsell,” said Miss Keel, with a look of antedated penitence for the faults she was about to commit, “will have a very bad partner.”

"I don't mind that," said the partner, who had not yet forgotten Miss Keel's tripping; "I'm accustomed to bad partners."

"I plead guilty to the charge," put in Mr. Wynum, with an insinuating smile and a graceful bow. "I know I often try your patience, Miss Maunsell."

"Quite the contrary, sir,"—this with dignified gravity; "'twasn't to you I alluded."

"To me, perhaps, Ellen," said Mrs. Archibald, with a look of affected humility.

"Well now, dear, you do put one in such a position."

All laughed, none more heartily than Miss Maunsell.

"May I make a proposition?" asked Mrs. Archibald.

There was a general bow of assent.

"I propose we change partners. I resign Mr. Wynum, and Miss Keel won't, I hope, object to me."

"Certainly not," said Miss Keel, rising with alacrity, "and I know Miss Maunsell has a preference for Mr. Wynum."

There was a roar of laughter. Mr. Wynum tried to restrain himself within the limits of a smile; but as for Margaret Morton, she laughed as though she should never cease. As the

change of partners was being effected, Miss Keel passed near Miss Maunsell. The latter caught her hand, and pressed it as she said, "You dear, simple-hearted creature." Then, looking at Mr. Wynum, she shook her head gently and elevated her eyes and hands, as though she would say, "We must have patience with her."

"A late visitor," observed Miss Maunsell, as, before the first game of the rubber was finished, a ring was heard at the house-door.

"Richard or Harry, I suppose," said Mrs. Archibald, "or both."

It was Harry Morton. Having saluted the company, he explained to his aunt why he was so late. "I shouldn't have come at all, but that Dick insisted. As he hasn't seen you and Meg for two days, he sent me to hope you're all well. I'm sure I hope you are."

He leaned back in his chair.

"I am tired," he went on; "we've had a hard day's work in the City, and now Dick is gone into his chambers to write. By-the-bye, that reminds me, Meg, I've something for you." He put his hand in the back pocket of his coat: "'tis a magazine, in which you will find an article of Dick's. I don't know whether he or you wrote most of it."

“Oh!” exclaimed Miss Maunsell, “what would be thought in French or Italian society of a young girl of whom such things were said!”

“Oh! we’re in England, Miss Maunsell, and ’tis a credit to a girl like my sister to be able to read and write.”

“I hope, sir,” retorted Miss Maunsell, firing up, “that reading and writing are not rare accomplishments amongst your lady acquaintances.”

“By no means, Miss Maunsell. I venture to say most of my lady acquaintances know how to read and write.”

“Henry,” said his aunt, “would you pull the bell? You look fatigued. You had better have a glass of wine.”

“Well, aunt, I *am* fatigued; I’m regularly done up; I’ve walked, or rather run, twenty miles to-day.”

The wine was now on the table. Henry Morton filled the ladies’ glasses, and pushed the decanter towards Mr. Wynum.

“Ladies,” he said, after having filled his own glass, “I drink to your good health, and to yours, Mr. Wynum. I congratulate you all on not being doomed to City work.”

“You look very pale indeed, Harry,” said

his aunt; "but did you come on foot from the Temple here? I didn't notice the sound of a cab when you arrived."

"I walked part of the way. In fact, I'd have been here three-quarters of an hour sooner, but that I met Cornet Wynum near Hyde Park. I saw him strolling slowly along, wrapped in his military cloak. I jumped out, and as he offered to walk back with me, I dismissed the cab."

"Then Cornet Wynum came back with you?"

"Yes, aunt. I pressed him to come in, but he couldn't. He had some military business to see after."

"It must be a stolen march he's trying to accomplish," said Miss Maunsell, with great animation, and looking slyly at Mr. Wynum; but the arrow did not reach the target. Mr. Wynum's face was turned away. He was engaged in discussing a musical question with Miss Keel.

"After all," said Miss Maunsell, "'tis rather strange that Cornet Wynum should have only reached Hyde Park at nine o'clock. 'Twas scarcely eight when he parted from us at this door."

"Did Cornet Wynum accompany you to this door?" asked Mrs. Archibald.

“Yes, dear, as usual.”

“Cornet Wynum,” said Mrs. Archibald, “has been twice this evening at my door, and has not done me the honour to come in.”

Mrs. Archibald cast a keen glance across the table at Mr. Wynum, but that gentleman was absorbed in listening to Miss Keel’s reasons for preferring Beethoven to Mozart.

“Well, dear, you know Cornet Wynum is just preparing to leave England for ever”—Miss Maunsell always tried to make the case as dolorous as possible—“he must have a great deal to think of; he must be often in low spirits when he thinks of—”

The speaker gave her head a shake that was meant to imply all sorts of calamities and sorrows, and glanced at the same time towards Mr. Wynum.

“Besides, dear,” she went on, “Cornet Wynum may not think it quite the thing to make a call so late, when your nephews are not at home.”

“You’re an excellent advocate, Ellen; pray don’t say I’m jealous of you, though I almost feel as if I were.”

“I have to thank Miss Maunsell for her eloquent defence of my son,” said Mr. Wynum “she fully appreciates his feelings.”

"'Tis a pleasure to err," said Henry Morton, "in the hope of being defended or forgiven by Miss Maunsell. I hope she forgives me."

"Oh, naughty, naughty! I must wait till you offend."

"Miss Maunsell, allow me to fill your glass."

Mr. Morton did so, and then filled his own.

"Let us drink," he said, "to the oblivion of past disagreeables, and to the ignoring of those of the future."

"An excellent sentiment," said Mr. Wynum, "in which I think all ought to join."

All did join; after which, Miss Maunsell discovered it was nearly eleven o'clock, and that poor Green would be waiting. Clifton fetched the bonnets and shawls of the two ladies. Margaret Morton, who, since receiving her cousin's message, had been sitting at the other end of the room, reading the magazine sent her, now came forward to say good-night to the departing guests.

"Well, Margaret dear," said Miss Maunsell, "I shall expect you to-morrow afternoon; 'twill be nearly the last day of the piano, and you, too, dear"—addressing Miss Keel, "of course you'll come. And indeed, dear," turning to Mrs. Archibald, "I think you might call in."

"Ellen," said the lady of the house, rising

from her couch, and making a courtesy, "I shall not fail to attend your military review," an observation which excited much merriment.

When Mr. Morton returned to Eva Terrace, after having escorted Miss Maunsell home, he found his aunt waiting for him in the drawing-room.

"Henry," said the lady, "can you delay your visit to the City to-morrow till eleven o'clock?"

"Certainly, aunt, or till twelve. I shall be glad to rest after to-day's work. To-morrow there's only the ordinary office work. The clerks can get on very well till I go down."

"My reason for asking is, that I wish to speak with you before you go into the City. You're fatigued to-night, so I shan't delay you."

"Oh, aunt, don't mind that."

"Yes, my dear, I do mind it." And, so saying, Mrs. Archibald kissed her nephew's cheek and wished him good-night.

CHAPTER XXI.

It was close on ten o'clock next morning when Henry Morton came down to breakfast. He found his sister reading in the library.

"Meg, I'm sorry for having kept you waiting. Why did you wait for me?"

"There was no hurry, Harry. I've been engaged."

Mr. Morton threw himself into an easy-chair.

"By Jove! I was deucedly tired yesterday; I'm tired still."

"You could have had your breakfast in bed."

"Pooh! pooh! Meg. That wouldn't do for commercial men. I shall be all right when I eat a good breakfast."

That was probably Clifton's idea, too; for she laid a good, hot, substantial breakfast on the table. Mr. Morton was either too fatigued or too preoccupied to talk much. His sister, though most attentive to supply his wants, profited by her brother's silence, and occasionally read portions of the magazine with

which she was engaged when he entered the room. Having eaten a hot mutton-chop, and afterwards helped himself to some spiced beef, and drunk a cup of hot, strong tea, the gentleman seemed more lively. His sister was refilling his cup,—

“Meg, you’re always alone here in the mornings?”

“Always, since uncle’s death, till you came.”

“You must be lonely.”

“No. I’ve a great deal to do in the mornings. I’m always very busy; every moment employed, till aunt comes to lunch.”

“I suppose, Meg,” said her brother, as he looked languidly round at the cases that lined the room, “you’ve read all these books?”

“No, indeed! I’ve read only a few, and I wish I knew them well.”

“Do you know, Meg, I’m rather afraid of a woman that reads big books. I sincerely hope you’ll not come to a bad end.”

“I sincerely hope so, too,” said his sister, laughing.

“I’m quite serious,” said the brother.

“So am I,” said the sister, and both laughed heartily.

“You’re very merry here,” said Mrs. Archibald, who had opened the door unnoticed. Her

niece and nephew rose to wish her good-morning. Her nephew set a chair.

"Why, aunt, it wants twenty minutes to eleven. I hope you haven't had bad dreams."

"Not at all, Harry. I've had pleasant dreams, and find 'em realized here. Margaret, I'll take half a cup of tea. Anything new in the *Times* this morning, Harry?"

"I've only read the City article. You don't care for that, aunt."

"Not much. Commerce is not my *forte*. This is Richard's article, I suppose," and Mrs. Archibald looked at the open page. "What is it like?"

"'Tis excellent. It reads very well. You'll be delighted with it."

Mr. Morton laughed, and told his aunt how he had been expressing a pious hope his sister would not come to a bad end, because of her fondness for dry reading. Mrs. Archibald said he was very silly, and deserved a scolding, and, saying so, she smiled.

"You met Cornet Wynum yesterday evening, Harry, on the way here?"

"Yes, aunt, I met him near Hyde Park. I was rather surprised when Miss Maunsell mentioned his having been here before that evening. How was it, Meg?"

“Miss Keel and I dined with Miss Maunsell; so did Mr. Wynum and Cornet Wynum. We all came back to this door together, but Cornet Wynum couldn’t come in. He had some business at his hotel.”

“Has Cornet Wynum dined every day this week with Ellen?”

“Every day I was there.”

“You didn’t mention that.”

“You didn’t ask me anything about the dinners, aunt.”

“Very true. Still I’m surprised you didn’t mention Cornet Wynum’s being there.”

“I didn’t think of doing so, aunt. Wouldn’t it seem to be attaching too much importance to the circumstance if I did?”

Mrs. Archibald looked at her niece. On that maiden brow truth, honour, and self-respect were plainly stamped.

“You were perfectly right, my dear, perfectly right.”

Margaret, knowing her aunt and brother met by appointment, left the room.

“Margaret is a first-class girl, aunt,” said Harry, and a flush of fraternal pride irradiated his face.

“She certainly is not a commonplace young lady; but, Harry, as I think I’ve before

remarked, the women of our family have never been wanting in self-respect."

"Very true, aunt. I believe the women of our family are much superior to the men."

"I shan't contradict you," and Mrs. Archibald smiled affectionately on her nephew. "Come over, Harry, and sit beside me."

He did so. His aunt pushed back the hair from his forehead, and looked with a mournful steadiness into his bright blue eyes.

"My dear Harry, you're so like your poor father, so fitful, so impulsive, so ready to acknowledge your faults, and so ready to—"

"Commit the same again," interrupted the young man, laughing. His aunt smiled.

"I assure you, Harry, thinking of the past makes me very sad."

"Then, aunt, don't think of it."

"I avoid it. You know I shrink from everything disagreeable. 'Tis my temperament, as Mr. Wynum would say."

"By-the-bye, aunt, talking of the Wynums, what did young Wynum mean by coming to this door twice yesterday evening, and not coming in?"

"'Tis strange, and Mr. Wynum's affecting such oblivious disregard when the matter was talked of. I looked across at him, but

couldn't catch his eye. He pretended to be wholly engrossed with Miss Keel."

"I noticed all that. I was very much amused."

"But, Harry, it may cease to be amusing if Richard should think fit to take notice of it."

"Oh, he'll not. Besides, young Wynum is going away; perhaps, next week. You remember, aunt, I said on Sunday I suspected Miss Maunsell. Now I'll tell you what I do think. I think your friend Ellen is a cat's-paw of old Wynum's. She don't like Margaret. She never did like her. She couldn't like any young girl when there's a gentleman in question, 'my dear sir.'"

And Harry Morton lowered his eyes, pursed up his mouth, drew in his head, and, half rising, made a semi-courtesy, presenting altogether so comical a caricature of Miss Maunsell that his aunt laughed spite of herself.

"Now, Harry, pray don't be ridiculous. I want your advice in this little matter; I want your assistance."

"Dear aunt, need I say 'Command me'? You see I'm shrewd. I saw through the little game last night as well as you."

"Yes. But I'm not equal to playing little

games now. What can Mr. Wynum's object be? Not to marry his son to Margaret. She would be the impediment there. She don't want to marry his son, nor to marry any one else."

"I know that, aunt. But," Mr. Morton added, after a pause, "I don't see why Margaret shouldn't take her tribute of admiration as well as other girls. There's Captain Wilmot, a most respectable man; he evidently admired Margaret very much."

"Another annoyance in that quarter. Miss Keel, poor simpleton, mentioned last evening something Captain Wilmot had said in praise of Margaret, and Ellen blazed up. It required a great deal of tact, I assure you, to cool her down."

"Bravo! bravo!" cried out Mr. Morton, throwing himself back on the couch. "So old Ellen is in love with the young captain! I didn't mind Mr. Wynum, but this is too good."

"Oh, Harry, pray be steadier. Ellen is not in love; 'tis only her manner."

"And a very nice, lively manner, too. I only hope she'll not fall in love with me, or with Dick. By Jove! that would be fun. I'd like to see how Dick would get out of that."

"Ah, Harry, do be quiet. I kept you from

the City this morning to get your advice, and you turn everything into ridicule."

"Dear aunt, excuse me. I shall now look at this business like a shrewd commercial man. Let's see. You're afraid of a row with Dick. Perhaps you're right. I don't say anything to that. I sometimes like a row. You believe poor dear Ellen to be a cat's-paw; so do I. I took it for granted she was Mr. Wynum's cat's-paw; so did you. Now a thought arises, may she not be Captain Wilmot's cat's-paw too? She may. But against that supposition stands the fact that the captain was not at any of the dinners to which Margaret was invited—at least, as far as we know; and, in addition, comes the question, could Captain Wilmot make Mr. Wynum and his son his tools? I say no. Now, aunt, that's my way of dealing with business. I consider the probabilities and the possibilities, and then I come to a conclusion according to the best of my judgment."

"Harry, I admire your shrewdness. 'Tis greater than I gave you credit for."

"I'm sure of that, aunt. Still, with all my shrewdness and all your tact, we have only arrived at the knowledge of a few patent facts. We know nothing of the motives."

"'Tis exceedingly perplexing," said Mrs. Archibald, in a tone of languid vexation.

"Think no more about it, aunt. Don't annoy yourself. The affair will arrange itself."

"I'm by no means sure of that. Mr. Wynum is a skilful man of the world. If he has an object in view he knows how to accomplish it. I really dread a scene with Richard, if he should work himself into a passion."

"My dear aunt, there's no danger. Dick can never hear of it. Wynum and Wilmot leave for India next week, so there's an end of the matter. Besides, there's nothing to hear of. If Meg had a liking for the cornet, or for the captain, the case would be different. You and I should then act differently. Meg doesn't care for either of 'em, so there's nothing in the affair."

"You know, Harry, I'm acting exclusively in Margaret's interests."

"I know that, aunt; and so am I, of course. Now don't worry yourself. Ten days will finish it. The military heroes will then be doubling the Cape. But 'tis twelve; I must be off. Dick and I will be here to dinner."

After lunch, Mrs. Archibald and her niece took a drive. Miss Morton wished to make some purchases, and the coachman was ordered

to turn his horses' heads towards Bond Street. The shopping business having been accomplished, the ladies drove for about an hour and a half in the Park.

"I shall now leave you at home, Margaret," said her aunt. "I've promised to call on Ellen. You've been so often to visit her of late that you'd scarcely care to come to-day."

"No, aunt. I don't care to call there to-day."

Mrs. Archibald landed her niece safely at Eva Terrace. Then, in pursuance of a line of policy she had resolved to carry out, she called on Madame Charleroi, who fortunately was at home. So was Monsieur Claude. The latter had an appointment with Miss Keel, and soon after Mrs. Archibald's arrival left, carrying in his hand a roll of music. The trysting-place was Miss Maunsell's drawing-room.

"Our friend is holding high state just now," said Mrs. Archibald. "I, who seldom pay visits—I really am not strong enough to bear the fatigue—have received an imperative summons to attend her drawing-room. May I ask if you intend to honour the meeting, madame?"

"One can hardly be invited to pay a visit, but I have received a verbal intimation that Miss Maunsell would be glad to see me."

“I don’t wonder that Madame Charleroi’s presence should be coveted in a musical assembly.”

“You’re very good. I haven’t had much practice in singing of late years; besides I’m not strong, and am quickly fatigued.”

“At my age, madame, one may be permitted to complain of fatigue, but not at yours.”

“The mother of a twenty-years old son may be allowed to plead age.”

Mrs. Archibald smiled, and said age should be reckoned by looks, not by years. His mother’s allusion to Monsieur Claude gave Mrs. Archibald an opportunity of introducing his name. How amiable, how well educated he was; how much Mr. Wynum and her nephews admired him, and how pleased she was to have made his acquaintance! All this was said in the most delicate manner, and rather insinuated than openly expressed. Mrs. Archibald made herself most agreeable, so much so that the French lady’s distrustful stiffness thawed down; she felt the truth so gently hinted by her visitor—the difference in their age—and believed that at intervals, as on that day, Mrs. Archibald was glad to be able to call on her friends, and when she now invited Madame Charleroi to take a seat in her carriage,

the invitation was immediately accepted, and the two ladies were ushered together into Miss Maunsell's presence.

The delight expressed by that good lady was great. It was with a feeling allied to pride she received Mrs. Archibald. Her coming was an evidence of friendship which could only be evoked in favour of Miss Maunsell, and then, calling on Madame Charleroi and bringing her to the meeting were acts regarded as fruits of successful negotiations formerly carried on by Miss Maunsell.

When Mrs. Archibald's party arrived, Miss Keel was seated at the piano. On her right hand stood Monsieur Claude; on her left, Captain Wilmot and Cornet Wynam; behind her chair was Mr. Wynam. Here was an array of male attendants sufficient to flatter the vanity or provoke the envy of any woman; but Miss Keel was never either flattered or envied.

When the members composing the group that surrounded the piano had concluded the operatic piece on which they were engaged, they paid their respects to the new arrivals, after which Captain Wilmot and Lieutenant Rogers seated themselves, one on each side of Miss Maunsell, who occupied the centre of a commodious couch. Mr. Wynam and his son

looked that everybody was made comfortable, and everybody being supposed to be in that condition, Mr. Wynum, seated beside Mrs. Archibald, expressed his regret at the absence of Miss Morton.

"We had calculated," he said, "on seeing and hearing Miss Morton. Miss Keel, I believe, had expected to play a duet with her young friend. It has been a disappointment to us all."

"I regret my niece was not able to come. She was busy with some of her cousin's manuscripts."

"Happy the gentleman," said Mr. Wynum, "who has a cousin able and willing to render the assistance Miss Morton does to Mr. Archibald."

"I wasn't aware," said Captain Wilmot, "that Mr. Archibald wrote for the press."

"Yes," said Mr. Wynum, "Mr. Archibald writes learned articles, in which the assistance given by his fair cousin is so great that, as Mr. Archibald modestly says, it would be difficult to say whether he or she has the larger share in them."

"An acknowledgment," said Captain Wilmot, "equally honourable to the lady and the gentleman."

“No doubt. That’s why I quote the saying.”

Mrs. Archibald thought she had made a clever point in showing how allied in tastes were her nephew and niece, but the point was turned against her. She began to feel uncomfortable. An incipient suspicion that Mr. Wynum was about to take up arms stole across her mind. She knew the battle—should a battle occur—would be between him and her; and she shrank, not in cowardice, but in weariness, from the conflict. Mr. Wynum’s assiduous attentions and watchful politeness were sources of discomfort to Mrs. Archibald. She remembered the days of old, when he, the male idol of his circle, allowed no one to eclipse him. She remembered how well he knew how to suppress, and, if necessary, extinguish, a rival, by an apparently accidental display of crushing forces. Though apprehensive, she felt she was equal to any emergency that might arise. She saw the folly of allowing things to drift on under Miss Maunsell’s direction or apparent direction. Like a prudent diplomatist, Mrs. Archibald resolved not to be the first to break the peace, and, after all, as she wisely thought, it may be only an affair of outposts, and never come to a pitched battle. Under the influence of these impressions, Mrs. Archibald responded

to Mr. Wynum's attentions, and showed herself very willing to keep him and his son within her circle. The young man was charmed. He took everything in good faith, and was happy in witnessing the reciprocal good feeling exhibited by Mrs. Archibald and his father.

"Mr. Wynum," said Mrs. Archibald, "instead of again reproaching your son, I shall make a complaint to his father. Why has Cornet Wynum renounced my acquaintance?"

"Is not Mrs. Archibald too severe in making that appear a crime which is really my son's misfortune? His professional duties have been multitudinous of late. He has only been able to snatch a few hours in the day to pass with me, but he is now becoming less busy."

"Then I may, perhaps, reckon on seeing Cornet Wynum this evening?"

"Unfortunately, no. My son and I dine with Captain Wilmot this evening."

"To-morrow evening, then?"

"To-morrow Captain Wilmot dines with us, but if Mrs. Archibald will allow us to pay our respects late in the evening we shall be happy to do so."

"You will be very welcome at any hour, and I hope I may reckon on seeing Captain Wilmot too."

The gentleman to whom the last words were addressed made the proper acknowledgment, and promised to accompany his friends to Eva Terrace.

Mrs. Archibald, in initiating her proposed line of policy, found complications immediately arise. She had not the remotest intention of inviting Captain Wilmot to her house five minutes before she gave the invitation, but she had unexpectedly found herself in a position where she could not avoid doing what she had done. However, she knew it was better to keep the reins in her own hands than allow Miss Maunsell to drive she knew not whither.

Miss Keel had played accompaniments and also *grands morceaux*. She had sung; so had Monsieur Claude, and so had Madame Charleroi. The four military gentlemen had taken parts in vocal performances, and Mr. Wynum had joined in. Mrs. Archibald, at length finding it was six o'clock, rose, and, pressing Miss Maunsell's hand, thanked her for a delightful afternoon. Mrs. Archibald requested to be allowed to reconduct Madame Charleroi and Miss Keel to their homes. There was much bowing and smiling and waving of hats exchanged between the party in the carriage and the group that stood on Miss Maunsell's steps.

Mrs. Green, looking up from the basement story, wondered what it really meant. She had already arrived at the conclusion that it was a case deserving investigation, and as the pursuit of truth was the grand object of Mrs. Green's life, she resolved to attempt the unravelling of the mystery that lay beneath a week of dinners, *matinées musicales*, and evening entertainments, to say nothing of polished speeches, waving hats, and carriage-drives.

Mrs. Archibald's playful vivacity as she journeyed homewards was in no wise less than it had been during the previous three hours.

"I'm afraid, Madame Charleroi, you'll pronounce me dissipated. I really think I'm becoming so. I've asked I know not how many young *militaires* to my quiet home for to-morrow evening. Pray don't say I'm becoming volatile."

"Let us rather hope you're becoming stronger and more equal to the effort of entertaining strangers."

"You're very good, but my powers of entertaining are so limited. May I hope, ladies"—including both in a glance—"you will favour me with your presence to-morrow evening?"

Madame Charleroi would be happy, so would Miss Keel.

"I feel very much," said Mrs. Archibald, gravely, "for poor Mr. Wynum. He is about to lose his son, after having just found him. Miss Maunsell has been studying their domestic happiness during the past week. I should not like to seem unmindful of my duty towards my old friend Mr. Wynum."

This was throwing a soft and pleasant light on matters which, the more Mrs. Archibald examined, the less she was able to comprehend. She had been desirous of knowing the truth, that is, of discovering the motives of Mr. Wynum's late proceedings, but the knowledge she had acquired by actual observation was perplexing, not satisfying. It was plain Mr. Wynum had some object in view, it was equally plain that somebody in her household was the target at which his arrows were directed, but whether the end contemplated was a mere social triumph, or a conquest of a more permanent character, she could not divine. Mrs. Archibald understood Mr. Wynum's character thoroughly. She knew that within his arena of action his skill was perfect; and she knew he was capable of bringing all the forces at his command into play, to wipe away a slight or exterminate a rival. But Mr. Wynum could now know no rivalry; and as to a slight, there

was no one in his present dwindled circle capable in any sense of wounding his feelings or depreciating his excellence. Was he then fighting a battle for his son? If so, on what account? He could not think of marrying his son to her niece. The monetary prospects of the two young people rendered such a scheme absurd. Mr. Wynum knew what these prospects were, and he, in whose mind money was an all-important consideration, could not entertain such a notion. But some little plot was being hatched, some little conspiracy was being concocted, but whether for a trivial or an important end Mrs. Archibald could not say. She had a great horror of another scene with either of her nephews, especially with Richard, and therefore thought it wiser to draw the electric fluid from the gathering cloud by a little apparatus of her own contrivance than allow it to accumulate till, meeting one differently charged, a thunder-storm should ensue. To avert the threatened danger it was necessary to get correct information. As far as she had yet gone in the search she had learned little. She now resolved to try Miss Maunsell, and this was a process on which Mrs. Archibald did not much like to enter. However, she hoped that, comparing what she had seen with

what she might elicit from her friend, she would be able to form an approximately correct opinion. The same evening Mrs. Archibald began her quest after truth. "Really, Ellen, this is alarming intelligence. You'll shortly want my maternal presence to keep you in countenance."

"Nonsense, dear! How you *do* talk!" And Miss Maunsell pursed up her mouth in a pouting smile that betrayed a flattered vanity.

"But let us just consider. A week of assiduous visits, and to-morrow a visit with his daughter, and afterwards a drive in the Park. If Captain Wilmot means nothing by this, I can only say I shall be much surprised."

"My dear, there's nothing in it. He knows I'm fond of children, 'purty' creatures! and he takes a pride in his little daughter, and quite natural. She's a dear little creature, I'm sure."

"The parting must be very bitter under such circumstances."

"Bitter! I should think so! The poor man feels he will never see his child again. If he shouldn't be drowned going over, he's sure to perish by fever."

"Let us hope not."

"Oh, my dear, 'tis very well to hope; but where we know the truth, we can't hope."

There was no reply to this. After a short pause Mrs. Archibald remarked,—

“Captain Wilmot is a very young man to be a widower with a daughter eight years old!”

“Well, that’s a matter of opinion. I don’t call a man of fifty very young.”

“Fifty! I shouldn’t say more than thirty-six or thirty-eight.”

“What a mistake, dear! Fifty, if he’s a day! I should even say a few years more.”

“You really surprise me!” said Mrs. Archibald, quietly.

“My dear, if we had the means of ascertaining, you’d find I’m correct. Captain Wilmot is a very well-looking man, upwards of fifty.”

Miss Maunsell flattered herself she looked about fifty, and to that numerical elevation she raised every disengaged gentleman that came within her circle.

“We can’t have our rubber this evening,” said Mrs. Archibald; “our gentlemen have deserted us.”

“Well, dear, we’ll make up for it to-morrow evening.”

“Yes; we shall have a crowd. You have been doing hospitality, Ellen, to such an extent

during the past week, I thought I ought to imitate you,—feebly, indeed, but still a little.”

“My dear, I couldn’t avoid it. Poor Mr. Wynum came down to me of a morning declaring he was inundated with presents of fowls and fruits and Strasbourg pies, and I know not what all. He protested he didn’t know what to do, and begged me to take the management of the housekeeping. And then we had hampers of the best wines of every kind.”

“These presents came very opportunely. Who sent ’em?”

“I don’t know. But, to tell you the truth, I suspect they came from the North. You know his brother is very rich.”

“Did you see the hampers unpacked?”

“No, dear, certainly not. The things were all sent down to my room. They were unpacked by Mr. Wynum and the cornet. I must say there’s plenty of money flying about. Where it comes from I don’t know; but you remember we’ve often remarked Mr. Wynum has been living very economically for years—saving money, I suppose.”

“For what purpose?”

“For his son, dear, of course.”

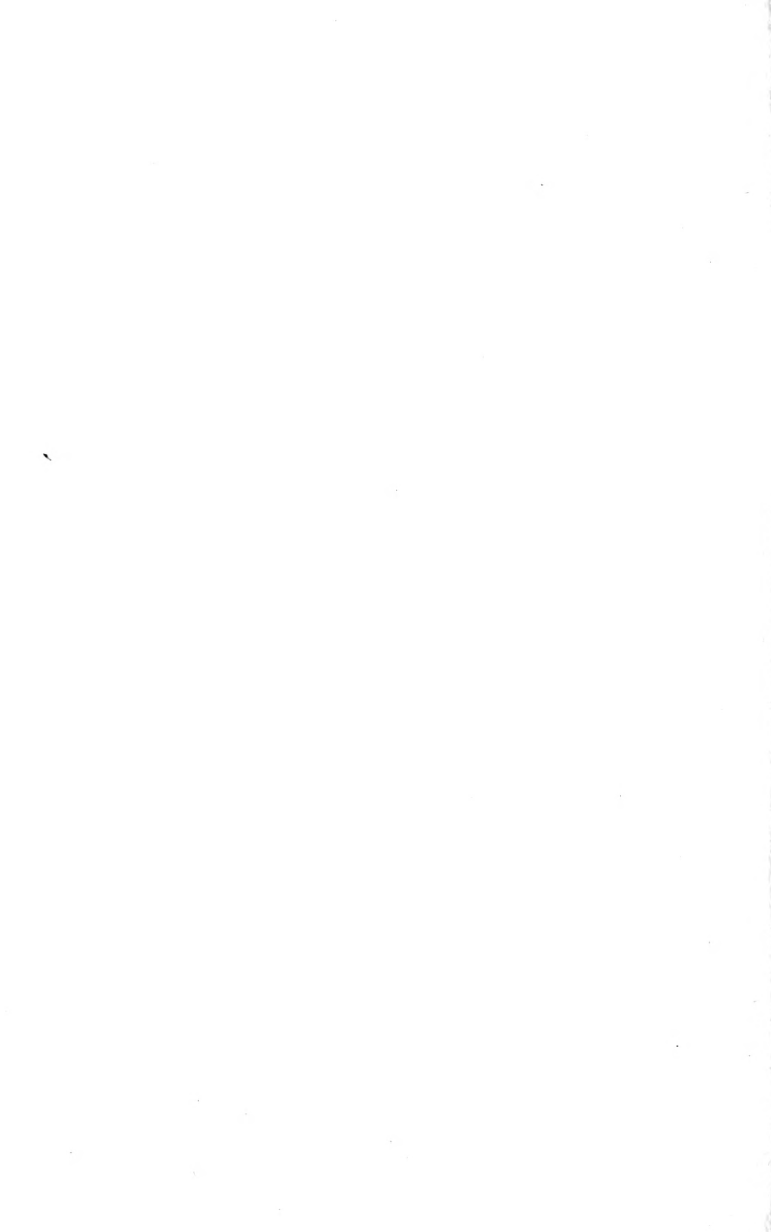
“I don’t think that probable.”

Mrs. Archibald did not feel much wiser after.

her attempts to extract information from Miss Maunsell. It was pretty plain that her revered friend was a tool in the hands of the skilful Mr. Wynum. All things considered, Mrs. Archibald believed her wisest course would be to allow events to develop themselves after their own fashion.

END OF VOL. I.

LONDON
PRINTED BY E. J. FRANCIS AND CO.,
TOOK'S COURT AND WINE OFFICE COURT, E.C.





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